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CHALMERS ON CHARITY

"Go as it may, your labours in this matter are not lost—no jot of them is lost. Nay, in one shape or another, as I believe, the thing that you advocate must verily realise itself in this earth. . . . My prayer is that a voice so humane, so true and wise, may long be heard in this debate, and attentively laid to heart on all sides."

—*Letter from Carlyle to Chalmers in* 1841.

Chalmers on Charity

A Selection of Passages and Scenes to illustrate the Social Teaching and Practical Work of

THOMAS CHALMERS, D.D.

Arranged and Edited by

N. MASTERMAN, M.A.

Eighteen years Member of the London Charity Organisation Society, and some time Guardian in the Parish of Kensington

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INTRODUCTION.

THE purpose of this book is to set before those who are interested in the welfare of the poor, the practical wisdom of a great man. The story of the life of Chalmers was written in very minute detail by his son-in-law, within a few years after his death, and has been presented to the public in a shorter form by later writers. To those who desire a graphic picture of the man and his times, the short and interesting lives by James Dodds and Mrs. Oliphant[1] may be recommended; and since they treat their subject in a somewhat different manner it is worth while to read them both. Some such biography is required as a companion to the present work, but there is no need to repeat a task that has been already well accomplished.

The name of Chalmers is familiar to many. It is not difficult to form a true conception of his life and character. But his writings are very little known even to the most studious and active workers

[1] They are published respectively by Oliphant, Anderson, and Ferrier, and by Methuen, under the title "Thomas Chalmers."

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in the social field. In the first place, they are not easily accessible. They have been out of print for nearly half a century. It is possible to obtain them in Edinburgh, and sometimes odd copies may be found in a soiled and time-worn condition among the dusty stores of a second-hand bookseller.

Their disappearance is partly accounted for by their inordinate length, and the mixture of their contents. Chalmers published more than a score of closely printed volumes in which his teaching on social questions is combined with a mass of theological and other matter which has lost its value; and the whole has been set aside together on the shelf appropriated to the forgotten divines of other days.

But even when we have obtained his works, and selected the chapters which bear upon our special subject, we are met by a further difficulty. With all our admiration for the writer, we must admit that there are peculiarities in his style which make it a laborious undertaking to study many pages at a time. His words and sentences are long, his treatment of a subject is always long and full of repetition. To use his own phrase, we may have "to travel through many a volume of ponderous erudition," in which the self-same ideas are presented over and over again in an endless effort to put them into different words. The phraseology is often cumbrous, and the use of a measured cadence and a balance of antithesis, however pleasing at times, is apt to become extremely wearisome. It can hardly be expected that the modern reader who is

accustomed to plain speech, will have the patience to work his way through a mass of such stiff material even for the sake of the gems and gold which abound in it.

This singular combination of what is attractive and repellent has been explained by his chief biographer. Eloquent as he was, we are told that Chalmers always wrote his sermons; and on the other hand, whatever he wrote was written after the manner of a speaker. He had always an audience before him which he was trying to impress or convert. His mind was full of intense convictions and thoughts that struggled for utterance. He could not produce a finished essay, but must reiterate his doctrine like a preacher, that it might lay hold of the minds of other men: and "he seldom rose from writing without the feeling that still other modes of influential representation remained untried."

And yet, when all due deduction has been made for superficial blemishes, what a mine of treasure he has left us in his writings. Here was a man who freely devoted the highest talents and the most unwearied industry to working out the very problems that perplex and trouble us in these latter days. He took no theory for granted, but made it his business to learn the truth about the poor, to understand the realities of their condition, and to find out the things that belonged to their welfare. Starting thus with fact and experience he became a sure guide and a teacher of authority. It is indeed remarkable how many of our best ideas

may be traced back to Chalmers, and how long ago he anticipated some of our latest discoveries. And if we have noticed some defects of style, yet, on the other hand how constantly is our admiration won by the force and precision of his utterances. How many are the brilliant passages that start from his pages unexpectedly. How often has he said the very thing that needed to be said, in the clearest and most convincing way. Even his habit of repetition has the merit of supplying a choice of expressions, each good in itself though it may be weakened by the context. Chalmers had much of the poet's power of clothing the truth in the most perfect language. We find it in the many phrases and turns of sentence, sometimes quaint, more often vigorous, inspiring, or decisive, which fix themselves in the memory and recur to the mind with the ideas that gave them birth.

Enough has been said to show that the works of Chalmers are eminently adapted to selection, though it may be added that the task of arrangement is by no means easy. In carrying it out the book has grown into its present shape. It was desired that the real author should speak in person, with only so much assistance from the editor as might be necessary to preserve a proper sequence, or to point a moral for a later generation. Accordingly the materials from various sources were brought together under certain headings in the first five chapters. No sooner was this done than a new proof appeared of the intimate connection between the teaching

and the practical work of Chalmers; for it was found that much of the best material remained unused, being almost inseparable from the story of his life. At the same time it was impossible to combine a narrative with the method of treatment by subjects. Hence the addition of the second part, in which the order of time is followed.

One further point may call for explanation. It may be questioned whether so much space should have been given to a condemnation of the Poor Law, since its existence in some form or other is held by many to be no longer open to debate. But the imperfections and abuses of this system are freely admitted on every side, and we have a great and growing mass of literature on the subject of its alteration or development. It is time that the case *against* the Poor Law should be fully stated. There are districts even now in England where it is practically non-existent. Let us only encourage the strong sense of a duty to the poor which happily prevails among us, let us make it efficient by the training and organisation of benevolence, and the minds of men may turn to far more hopeful ways of improving their condition. Chalmers held that the troubles of our social state were mainly due to a long course of misguided interference with the order of nature. No statement of his views could be adequate or even fair, which should fail to give full scope to this argument, and to insist upon the vital distinction which he drew between the Charity of Law and the Charity of Love.

Our object has been to rescue a few of his lost pages from oblivion, and to place them in the hands of some of those earnest workers whose efforts they may guide and stimulate in the broad field of charitable enterprise. The way is long, the work is hard; but the more closely we can follow Chalmers, the more surely we shall fulfil the confident aspiration of the Scottish poet—

> "Then let us pray that come it may,
> As come it will for a' that,
> That sense and worth o'er a' the earth
> May bear the gree, and a' that.
>
> For a' that and a' that,
> It's coming yet for a' that,
> That man to man, the world o'er,
> Shall brothers be for a' that."

N. M.

SOURCES OF THE EXTRACTS.

The following works have been quoted. The list may be of service to those who have access to them.

I. BOOKS.

The Christian and Economic Polity of a Nation, otherwise called *The Christian and Civic Economy of Large Towns.* The former title was substituted for the latter by the author. The chapters of most use to the student of Charity are, I.-IV., VII., and X.-XXI. The four appendices are also valuable, especially the third containing his evidence before a Committee of the House of Commons in 1830.

The Sufficiency of the Parochial System without a Poor Rate, especially Sections I.-IV.

Political Economy, from which very few quotations have been taken.

Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Dr. Chalmers, by his son-in-law Dr. Hanna, 1851. This is the chief authority for the narrative part of the present work.

II. ESSAYS.

There are nine Essays usually bound up with the volume on *Political Economy.* We have quoted more

or less freely from eight of these, amongst which Nos. 2, 4, 6 and 8 may be particularly recommended. Their titles are as follows:

1. "The Supreme Importance of a Right Moral to a Right Economical State of the Community."—*Edinburgh Review*, 1832.

2. "Connexion between the Extension of the Church and the Extinction of Pauperism."—*Edinburgh Review*, 1817.

3. "Comparison of Scotch and English Pauperism."—*Edinburgh Review*, 1818.

4. "Distinction between a Legal Charity for the Relief of Indigence and a Legal Charity for the Relief of Disease."—Read before the Royal Institute of France, 1838.

5. "The System of Parochial Schools in Scotland."—1819.

6. "Moral and Spiritual Influence of Parochial Associations."

7. "The Example of our Saviour a Guide for Charitable Institutions."

8. "Application of Statistics to Moral and Economical Questions."—Read to the British Association at Glasgow, 1840.

III. SERMONS.

"The Blessedness of Considering the Case of the Poor."

"The Superior Blessedness of the Giver to that of the Receiver."

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PART I.

THE TEACHING OF CHALMERS

CHAPTER I.

GREAT EXPECTATIONS.

"But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper. . . . So he turned and went away in a rage.

"And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?"—2 *Kings* v. 11-13.

"THERE are so many philanthropists in this our day that, if each of them, who is qualified, were to betake himself, in his own line of usefulness, to one given locality, it would soon work a great and visible effect upon society." This sentence, with its thoughtful limitations, affords a good introduction for a chapter which is to point the contrast drawn by Chalmers between the solid and the visionary, the natural and the artificial—between splendid schemes and quiet usefulness.

No doubt the number of practical workers is very

much greater at the end of the nineteenth century than it was at the beginning, but a wide field is still occupied by the advocate of patent remedies for social evils, and many minds are fascinated by his advertisements. We are but too familiar with that political benevolence which offers as a gift from above the improvement that can only come from within. The spirit of the times is still marked by a "rage for generalising" and an "appetite for designs of magnificence." "There is an impatience on the part of many a raw and sanguine philanthropist, for doing something great; and akin to this there is an impatience for doing that great thing speedily. They spurn the condition of drivelling amongst littles; and unless there be a redeeming magnificence in the whole operation of which they bear a part, are there some who could not be satisfied with a humble and detached allotment in the great vineyard of human usefulness. . . . Nothing will serve but a mighty organisation with the promise of mighty consequences; and, let any single person be infected with this spirit, and he may decline from the work of a single court or lane in a city, as an object far too limited for his contemplation." Chalmers regarded such persons as the victims of a sad disease which we should try to cure. "And we may often have to deliver a man from this ambitious tendency ere we can prevail upon him to sit humbly and perseveringly down to

his task—ere we can lead him to forget the whole, and practically give himself to one of its particulars —ere we can satisfy him that, should he moralise one district of three hundred people, he will not have lived in vain—ere we can get him to pervade his locality and quit his speculation."

At a time when the tendency is so strong to place reliance on those abstractions which we call the State, or the Municipality, we need to be reminded of the fact observed by Burke, that although it is in the power of a government to prevent much evil, it can do very little positive good. The rulers of the people are in a most unfavourable position for sharing in the work that is needed to improve the condition of the people. However capable they may be, their time is very fully occupied. They cannot neglect their pressing duties in order to make a minute and lengthened study of those complex social questions, a single one of which might afford occupation for a lifetime; much less to descend into the actual arena and help to work them out. Hence there is need of extreme caution in framing regulations which must often rest on the basis of a very moderate acquaintance with their subject.

"It is the misfortune both of a civic and of a national legislator, that he deals so much in generalities. He casts a hurried glance over the whole field of contemplation; and the influence of what he

does, or of what he devises, is thinly spread along the face of the territory before him. He is seldom arrested by that dull and humbling arithmetic, which casts up to him the utter insignificance of all that he has attempted on the general mass and habit of society. He vainly tries, by his one enactment, to measure strength with the needs or the immoralities of a vast population. Nor will he submit to the mortification of being told that, though the sound of it has gone forth among all, the sensible and pervading influence of it is scarcely felt among any. It is the wideness of his survey which makes him overlook particulars; and with his habit of largely expatiating, does he neglect completely and minutely to fill up. This it is which accounts for the utter futility of many projects splendid in promise, and vanishing away into a meagre accomplishment. This it is which explains the abortive magnificence of many of our great national undertakings. But all this is the natural effect of office and situation; nor can we well expect it to be otherwise, either with the members of a legislature or with the members of a municipality."

How, again, is it conceivable that a few men at a single centre should be competent to prescribe and regulate the work of thousands all over the land? The belief that such a task must be attempted may well give rise to feelings of despair. "He who has

a place and an authority in the counsels of the empire, takes a wide and extended survey over the whole of it—and by a sort of fancied ubiquity, he brings himself into contact with all the struggles and difficulties of all the parishes—and he somewhat feels as if the weight and the labour of what is indeed a very operose concern, were wholly accumulated upon his own person—and instead of regarding pauperism as that which can only be put to death by inches, and with the help of many separate hands, he sees it as standing forth in single combat, a hydra of dread and direful encounter, at the sight of whom every heart fails and every arm is paralysed."

Then, in order to combat the monster, heroic action is imperative. "You forget," says Bastiat in his cheerful way, "that you are a legislator. A legislator must not be disheartened at trifles, when he is making experiments on others." So the disease is to be treated by some "great prescription of political empiricism," and the people are afflicted by new troubles arising out of "the impotent crudities of a speculative legislation." When an elective body undertakes to deal with social questions, a field is open to the agitator, with his fluent exposition of one-sided opinions, and his appeal to the selfish interests of a class. He may not be in any true sense their representative, and yet he may mislead so many as to gain a following, and become worthy of consideration from a party

point of view. If we may acquit him of any personal motives, yet his ignorant enthusiasm renders him a very unsafe guide for those who are too blind to perceive the contradictions involved in what he recommends. Newspapers also can be found to write in praise of anything. "It is worthy of remark how readily and how confidently our common-place speculators will advance and advocate their expedients of all sorts for the alleviation of the economic pressure, if they have but the semblance of a tendency that way, without once considering whether, if adopted in the lump, they would not conflict with and neutralise each other. They are not arrested for a moment by this consideration; and will call out strenuously for Savings Banks, and as strenuously for a Poor Law . . . though there be not a deadlier foe than a Poor Rate is to the economy that would lay up and accumulate."

We may dismiss from consideration that "least and lowest specimen of the influence of politics" on charity, when a corrupt ministry plans a deliberate job to increase its own patronage and provide salaries for its supporters. This is happily unknown in England now, whatever may be the case in other countries. The temptation to our rulers is of a more subtle kind. They may agree with Chalmers that "it is the part of every well-principled government to discriminate between a seeming and a real good to the population;

and never, for the sake of popularity, to provide the former, even if it only practise thereby a harmless deceit on the public imagination—and still more if, under the guise of an apparent blessing to the poor, there lurks an influence at once ruinous both to the moral and economic prosperity of the lower orders." But it is hard for the most high-minded politician to assert unpalatable truths, and to prefer on every occasion the true interests of his constituents to the gratification of their wishes.

Much courage is required of all who take the unpopular side by discountenancing well-meant efforts which they feel to be injurious. "The advocate for charity, in any of its forms, has always, at first sight, much to recommend him to the partiality of his auditors. He is doing something for the interest of humanity in the shape of a positive service. He is making a movement to which he is prompted, in all appearance, by an impulse of kindliness. He is exercising his thoughts and lifting his voice in behalf of distress; and there is something in the mere aspect of such an exhibition that is calculated to prepossess his observers, and to hold him out in a light of very advantageous contrast, either with the selfishly indifferent who care not about his projects, or with the actively hostile who oppose them.

"On the other hand an opponent, not of charity, but of some of its particular forms, has often much

in the shape of initiatory dislike and prejudice to struggle with. However much he may prevail in the argument, and, at the conclusion of it, may vindicate his character as an enlightened friend of the species, he has not unfrequently to brave the hazard and the resistance of a most unpopular outset. The public are apt to be revolted by that array of hardihood which a mere reasoning philanthropist is so likely to throw around his speculations; and should he at length succeed in carrying their acquiescence along with him, this is an object for which he must fight his way, at one time through the gentler remonstrances of an alarmed delicacy, and at another through the clamours of a boisterous and reproachful indignation."

If the position is an awkward one for a private person or a society, it is doubly so for the politician, since he knows that the adoption and success of his whole foreign and domestic policy depends on the possession of a sufficient measure of popularity to ensure the election of his adherents. Here the claims of party are at variance with those of principle; and perhaps at the very moment some proposal for state pensions or assistance to the unemployed is occupying the public interest. The temptation is strong to make a concession on what may be regarded as a minor matter. "The greatest danger of this is when the two great parties in the state are almost equally poised; and with a readiness in each to lay hold of

any element which might give it an advantage over the other, there ensues between them a rivalship for popularity, a bidding for the good opinion of the multitude, which, in these days when the constitution has been so greatly popularised, is of so much more importance than ever for the attainment of power. And the question of pauperism is precisely the one which stands most in danger of being thus tampered with; and accordingly there is perhaps none which has been so frequently made a stalking-horse for the objects of political men." An example is given from the delay in passing measures for general education in England and religious instruction in Scotland, "when the ruling party found it necessary, in order to conciliate the dissenters, to keep both of these vital questions at abeyance." And the introduction of the Irish Poor Law is attributed to the same cause, namely, that "men of both parties make on this particular question a sacrifice of their own convictions; and will rather join in the perpetration of a grievous injury to the common people, than incur the odium of a seeming hostility against them. It is thus that the questions of most urgent importance to the good of society are disposed of—decided, not on their own merits, but so as to subserve for the time being the ever-shifting objects of a wretched partisanship."

But even if ulterior aims can be eliminated, and

a great question considered solely on its merits, what amount of confidence can be felt in the wisdom of any popular assembly? There is a wide-spread belief in the omniscience of a member of Parliament which seems quite unreasonable, and is not entertained with regard to men engaged in other professions. He is expected to be a safe guide in every department, though it is not possible that he should have made an accurate study of every phase of life and thought. He may be specially qualified to advise about education or the army, but he has never been a Poor Law Guardian, or he is unacquainted with the mysteries of trade. He is one among several hundred men whose qualifications vary to an indefinite extent, and who decide by a majority. It follows that under a representative system almost every law is of the nature of a compromise between the views of specialists and those of ordinary people. It represents an average opinion. This no doubt is well, for we escape the peril of extremes. But the fact should modify that sanguine trust which many place in the power of "the State" to deal with social difficulties. We are familiar with the Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry, and to some its value appears to lie in the very characteristic for which it has been most heartily abused. It is in fact an excellent device for securing an interval for discussion which may lead to the gradual growth of

sound opinions; and it often ends after many months in the best way, by the quiet shelving of a matter which the government could not refuse to consider, but on which it is most undesirable that they should legislate.

Discussion indeed can hardly be too exhaustive, since the most important thing is to make men realise how complex and difficult these questions are. But when it is proposed to take action from headquarters, it will be wise to consider how insecure the basis often is on which we are invited to rear a massive edifice. In this connection we may notice the remarks of Chalmers on the Science of Statistics, a branch of study which was not less fascinating to some of his contemporaries than it has been to some of ours. "The word is comparatively recent; and we always understood it as the sub-diminutive of state," and as expressing the "knowledge of a subject in its several parts," as distinct from "the knowledge that we may have of it as a whole." It represents the study of details rather than the bird's-eye view. This is a most valuable method of inquiry which, if rightly employed, will "mightily contribute not to the facts only, but to the philosophy of all the sciences, securing a far more deep and thorough insight into any given matter of contemplation; and bringing up to view more both of the inner structure and hidden principle of things. It would advantage human

knowledge by all the difference between a superficial and a profound acquaintance with nature in its various departments; and be the parent of great discoveries—just as the treatment of a small bit of chalk opened up a new store-house of wonders in chemistry, and unravelled secrets to which no general survey of all the cliffs and strata on the face of the earth could ever have led the way." But in order to possess this practical value, it must include a knowledge of "living principles," and lead up to general truths. The work of the philosopher must be added to that of the mere statist and surveyor. "To ascertain the facts of a case is truly a distinct matter from that of providing for the case. But this seems well-nigh forgotten in the work of legislation as practised now-a-days. If in former times the tendency was to proceed on principles without facts—as if to keep at the greatest possible distance from this error, the incessant demand now is for facts without principles. And so our empirical statesmen would commit questions of the most momentous import into the hands of mere collectors and empirics like themselves."

He insists on making the process complete; and has a good word for the much abused doctrinaire. "We are aware of the fashionable contempt for theory; but a sound theory is one thing, and ought not to be confounded with an untried hypothesis,

which is another. A theory is a general proposition, which may be true in spite of its generality; and in this case it becomes a general fact, all the more important in proportion to its generality, because embracing then a larger portion of truth, or comprehending all the larger number of facts and phenomena. Theory, now-a-days, has become the object of an adverse popular cry, hooted at as a stigmatised outcast; and so put forth of the camp, to make room for the chance-medley collections of the present day. It is thus that our statists, professed worshippers though they be of the inductive philosophy, have utterly mistaken wherein it is that the great strength of this philosophy lies." And he quotes with approval the remark of another critic that "their whole labour consists in sowing figures and reaping sums."

The authors of the recent *Statistical Account of Scotland* had decided "to confine their attention rigorously to facts, and as far as it may be found possible, to facts which can be stated numerically and in tables"; and one of them had set down the weights and prices of all the church bells in Glasgow. At this rate, "how many are the solemn insignificancies which might be palmed on the notice of the public." Anything would suffice, provided that it satisfied "the two conditions of the numerical and the columnar." He complains that they left no room for "studying the human nature of the subject," as shown in the lives

of the poor, and by the testimony of those who worked among them. All such information was rejected as irrelevant, and "they would have been better pleased had I brought lists or inventories of all the chairs and pans and tables, and other articles whether of food or furniture, that I could lay my hands upon in the dwellings of my common people." There was more wisdom in the newspaper editor who headed his paragraph, *Statistics Worth Knowing*. "But absolutely to ensure that, in the great mass and majority of what has been piled together in the lumbering and voluminous collections of the last few years, the statistics shall not be worth knowing—behold another rule or maxim of one of their most celebrated societies, even that the Statistical Society of London will consider it the first and most essential rule of its conduct, to exclude carefully all opinions from its transactions and publications."

These sentiments are the more noteworthy when we remember that Chalmers was a very able mathematician, and that he only abandoned that course of study in order that he might give all his time to what he felt to be higher work. In another essay he points out the value of figures for several purposes. They compel accuracy in observation, minute examination, and careful registration; they lead to the detection of vitiating flaws in any process, or set a stamp on its real worth. They convince many who

cannot follow the process, that its results are based on calculation rather than imagination; and they furnish the only style of argument that appeals to another set of people. "It is difficult to handle these topics at all, without betraying a certain sympathy and felt interest in the concerns and fortunes of the human family; but mark the instant effect which the betrayal of any such emotion has, in lighting up a leer of incredulity, if not of contempt, on the faces of our hard and heartless utilitarians. They have altogether disjoined and isolated from each other, the intellectual from the moral faculties of our nature; as if the perceptions of a man's understanding and the sensibilities of his heart could not be in play at the same instant. And accordingly, on the moment that a man begins to feel, he, in their estimation, ceases to discern. For their sakes, therefore, and as they seem to hold that science and sentiment are incompatible with each other, I think it most desirable, not certainly to suppress the one, but to make full acquittal of our pretensions to the other: and seeing that they are disposed to regard with suspicion all the effusions of an ardent philanthropy, as if they were mere fancies or figures of speech, I would provide, and in abundant supply, the only others which they seem to care for—the figures of arithmetic. This, it would appear, is the only demonstration to their liking—the osteology of

a bald, numerical, naked skeleton. I should imagine that they had a marvellous preference for dried specimens; and that the freshness of a living subject was utterly distasteful to them." The ancient Greeks had one word for truth and beauty, "whereas it seems to be almost a category with these modern philosophers that nothing can be true which is beautiful, and nothing can be beautiful which is true."

Such being the uses and abuses of statistics, it is evident that they require very careful handling by competent persons possessed of special knowledge in the department to which they refer, if the conclusions derived from them are to be trustworthy and not misleading.

Passing on from these obvious sources of weakness in the counsels of our rulers, we have next to ask whether central direction or compulsion in any form be not a sorry substitute for private enterprise and self-reliance. For a long period it was held to be the duty of the State to regulate commerce, and the resources of the nation were crippled, and her progress hindered by well-meant interference. At the time when Chalmers wrote, a more enlightened policy had been adopted, and in this department the British Parliament had recognised "how much of the wisdom of legislation lies in letting matters alone."

"We often hear of the wisdom of nature, as evinced in the laws and adaptations of the material world;

but the same wisdom may be as visibly discerned in the frame and principles of our mental constitution, the spontaneous working of which often leads to a far better result than all the skill and vigilance of statesmen can possibly effectuate. A commerce which results from the free enterprise of individuals, each devising and labouring for his own special advantage, is greatly more flourishing and more conducive to the real prosperity of a kingdom, than a commerce which is nourished by the bounties, and at the same time guided by the regulations of the statute book. The whole of political economy bears evidence to the perfection of what may be termed the natural system of human industry and human exchanges, in opposition to the artificial system that, whether in the form of encouragements or restraints, acts with all the mischievous influence of a disturbing force on the operations of a previous and better mechanism."

Freed from its bonds our trade had grown with marvellous rapidity. Chalmers drew a lesson from this experience. He found in it a reason for "committing the cause of poverty back again to those charities of private life, from which it has been so unwisely wrested, and by that same intermeddling spirit too which has cramped the free energies and operations of commerce. The home trade of benevolence has been sorely thwarted and deranged by

the impolitic bounties, and the artificial channels, and the unnatural encouragements, and all the other forcing and factitious processes that a well-meaning government has devised for the management of a concern which should have been left to itself, and to those principles of its own that would, if alike unhelped and undisturbed, have wrought out a far better result than we have now the misfortune to behold."

It is impossible to treat the subject of the present chapter after the manner of Chalmers, without referring to the great example of state socialism afforded by the Poor Law, and so far trenching on the province of the next. Here, therefore, it will be best to confine our notice of the Poor Law system to the general characteristics which it has in common with other large centralised schemes of benevolence, reserving for our second chapter the more detailed consideration of its nature and effects.

The first point to be noticed in all such schemes is their artificial character. We can easily imagine an ideal state of things, but the attempt to realise it by any other means than a slow moral growth, produces only a piece of machinery. The authors of the design may be men of lofty aims and consummate ability, but its reduction to a practical shape will rest with men of ordinary calibre, and the result of their deliberations will represent the

average of their knowledge and intelligence. The actual working of the scheme will fall into the hands of yet another set of men. For this a staff must be employed with numbers in proportion to its magnitude. If the area of its operation is to include the whole country, there must be a vast number of officers and subordinates, ranked in various situations according to their education and capacity; and, as few can afford to give their services for nothing, they must be paid to perform the particular tasks for which each is fitted. The splendid vision of a social regeneration has faded into thin air, leaving behind it a very prosaic and substantial factory. What more could be expected from the State? She can provide us with workshops which may turn out a certain class of goods, true to pattern; as, for instance, a class of paupers, distinct in certain features from any other in the commonwealth. We must look elsewhere for the means to organise benevolence, or elevate the people.

This is the lesson of the Poor Law. Quoting Burke again, "To provide for us in our necessities is not in the power of government. It would be a vain presumption in statesmen to think they can do it." But the attempt has been made on a most extensive scale, and has ended in the natural way. "Benevolence has been moulded into the shape and lifelessness of a statue by the hand of legislation."

We have set up a system of routine, under whose "heartless generalities" an equal measure is meted out to claimants of every kind, without room for generosity on the one side or gratitude on the other. In the place of personal intercourse between man and man, we have the decisions of a "stately and elevated Board"; instead of "living sympathy" there is the grant of "naked provender." The following picture of the actual administration will be familiar to every Guardian.

"The dispensers of relief, oppressed by the weight and multiplicity of applications, and secretly conscious, at the same time, of their inability to discern aright into the merit and necessity of each of them, are apt to take refuge either in an indiscriminate facility which will refuse nothing, or in an indiscriminate resistance which will suffer nothing but clamours and importunities to overbear it. . . . They seldom reckon on any other way of providing for human need than by the positive discharge of legal aliment thereupon. So that their only, or at least their chief business, in the intercourse they have with the applicants, is simply to ratify or to dismiss their claim, on the investigation they have made into their palpable resources upon the one hand, compared with their palpable exigencies upon the other. In the whole of this process there is much of the coldness and formality of a court of

law; and the very magnitude of the concern, along with the unavoidable distance at which the members of such an elevated board stand from those who venture to approach it, serves to infuse still more of this character into all the large and general managements of pauperism. All is precise, and rigorous, and stately; or, if any human feeling be admitted, it is not the warmth of kindness, but the heat of irritation. The repeated experience of imposition; and the consciousness of inability thoroughly to protect themselves from the recurrence of it; and the sensation of a growing pressure, against which no other counteractive is known, or ever put into operation, than that of a stern or a suspicious treatment, which only calls forth a more resolute assertion on the part of the aggressors upon public charity—these are what have instilled a certain acerbity into all its ministrations."

As a match to its class of paupers, the state system gives birth to an official class, whose members, however competent for the discharge of special duties, are apt to lose the power of seeing anything beyond the mere observance of their rules. They follow the "trodden walk of officiality," and cannot endure innovation. This state of mind is subject to delusions of its own. "There are certain of our mere operatives in public affairs who, however plentiful their reproach of others as visionaries, never dream

that they are visionaries themselves. They seem to regard it as their sufficient exemption from such a charge, that their hand is so wholly occupied in practice, and their mind so little, if at all, occupied with principle. It would look as if, to escape from being a theorist upon any given topic, it were altogether necessary to abstain from thinking of it ; and that, to stamp a sound and experimental character on a man's notions, it is quite enough that he personally bustle and spend all his time among the mere matters of manipulation and detail." These "practitioners" can listen to no argument that is "couched in general language and drawn from the principles of human nature." They have no belief in study or meditation. "They have missed the self-discernment which might have led them to perceive that the possessor of a body, which moves its dull and unvarying round through the duties of public office, and of a mind that is either profoundly asleep to the rationale of public affairs, or catches its occasional view of them by rapid and confused glances—that he, with all the confidence which a kind of coarse and hackneyed experience has given to him, may very possibly be the most blundering and bewildered of all visionaries."

It is not denied that such a man may be very useful in his place. "He may be a clever accountant in the poor-house, and an active superintendent of some one of its departments, and the wisest of all

his colleagues in the business of framing regulations, and yet be as little prepared, by all this official expertness, for the general question, as if his only business had been to preside over the cookery of the establishment—to taste of its charitable soup, or to deal it out with pointed regularity to the repairing multitude. A kind of talent, no doubt, is requisite for all these operations." But when we are considering the larger aspects of the Poor Law, an "institutional experience is not the experience which throws any light upon the real and original merits of this question." It is "totally dissimilar from the experience of a diligent observer on the hearts and habits and household economy of the poor." And so "it is not the man who has wildered all his days among the bye-tracts of error, it is not of him that you would most readily inquire the highway to truth; and his very familiarity with the windings and ambiguities of that labyrinth in which he long has been involved, forms in our mind a presumption against any deliverance of his on the question at issue. . . . The likeliest counsellor upon this subject is not the man who has travelled, however long and laboriously, over the inner department of committee-ship, but the man who travels, and that on an errand distinct from common charity, over the outer department of the actual and living population."

The next point to observe is the way in which

expectations are aroused by a general administration. The belief in the inexhaustible nature of a revenue derived from public sources is a most pernicious fallacy; and in proportion to the size of the area is "the seducing effect on the popular imagination. . . . The business and expenditure of five thousand a year for the whole town have in them more of visible circumstance and parade than would the separate expenditures of as many hundreds in each of its ten parishes. Pauperism would become less noxious simply by throwing it into such a form as might make it less noticeable. For that relaxation of economy, and of the relative duties which follows in the train of pauperism, is not in the proportion of what pauperism yields, but of what it is expected to yield; and therefore is it of so much importance that it be not set before the eye of the people in such characters of promise or of power as might deceive them into large and visionary expectations." The poor are characterised by a "sanguine arithmetic," in virtue of which their "rapacity is whetted by the imagination of a great collective treasure." It is this which accounts for the attraction that is exercised by the report of a public charity in any place. Newcomers appear, like vultures, from a distance, eager to share the spoil with those already on the spot. For the chance of a paltry dole men will often abandon their regular employment. It is an instance of the

gambling spirit that plays such havoc with the resources of the poor.

The appetite for relief having been thus excited, attempts are made to check it by artificial means of every sort. But all in vain. The principle of the Poor Law is like the rod of Aaron, whereby "if it once make its appearance amongst them, all the divinations of all the wise men will be swallowed up and brought to nothing." The fact is that "no power of inquisition can protect a public charity from unfair demands upon it, and demands, too, of such weight and plausibility as must in fact be acceded to, and have the effect of wasting a large and ever-increasing proportion of the fund on those who are not the rightful or the legitimate objects of it. We speak not merely of the arts by which every claimant can disguise his actual circumstances. We shall suppose that this point can be most rigidly ascertained, that a precise inventory can be taken of all his means and possessions, that every latent source of maintenance can be fully detected and brought before the view of the guardians and distributors of charity, and that a correct judgment can at all times be formed on the question whether the present situation of the applicant be such as might entitle the public to leave him to himself. This is the only question which the dispensers of a legal charity ever do take up, and, what is more, it is the only question which they are able to

resolve. The question of the previous habits of the applicant for relief they do not entertain; and if they did entertain it, they would find that its satisfactory solution was far beyond the reach of all their expedients of vigilance and inquiry. . . . They could not go over the whole previous expenditure of his family. They could not limit or modify the multifarious details of his personal and domestic economy. They could not enter his house and prune away all the superfluities of indulgence that go on in it." This sort of influence can only be exercised by the personal intercourse of those who live and work among the poor. They, indeed, can reach the hidden sources of distress, and prevent the origin of a disease which no after-treatment could arrest or cure. But to the agents and office-bearers of a charity it is not possible. "And let them be as multitudinous as they may, and completely provided with all the forms of strict inquiry and prying inspection, and skilfully-constructed schedules, and bodies of men arranged into a curious assortment of committees and sub-committees; in short, let them get up an apparatus of defence and of distribution as ingenious as they may, they will, in every one of their objects, be counter-wrought and prevailed over by a still more ingenious population."

The causes of this failure lie in the depths of human nature. "It is reluctance on the part of the poor man to become a pauper which forms the mighty

barrier against the extension of pauperism. . . . There is not a labourer in the country, however well paid he may be, who might not become a pauper at the first moment of his decaying strength or of his declining wages; and that just by such a relaxation of his previous economy as could not be detected by the most watchful guardianship of men appointed to preside over this department of the public interest. . . . To relax the industry by a very little, or to let down to a small and imperceptible extent the economical habits, or to regale the appetite with a few secret and scarcely unallowable delicacies—these are the simple expedients by which, when once the mighty hold of self-dependence is loosened and done away, the daily-increasing thousands of a city population may, in the shape of famished wives, or ragged children, or destitute old men, inundate the amplest charity that ever was reared, to the full extent of its capabilities and its funds." It is the very existence of a public provision for want which relaxes the private economy; and this is why we find that "every known charity for the relief of indigence multiplies its objects. . . . It tells, and with great practical certainty, upon all their habits of indulgence and expense. . . . And hence it is that a public charity necessarily creates more poverty than it provides for; that a feeling of pressure or deficiency haunts every footstep of its operations; and that the evil which it tries to over-

take swells and magnifies and retires upon all its advances."

We shall see further on how the expenditure increased by leaps and bounds wherever the Poor Law was introduced into Scotland. But the financial point is a minor consideration. "It is not the heavy expense of it that we hold to be the main evil of English pauperism. We should reckon it a cheap purchase, if for the annual[1] six or eight millions of poor rate, we could secure thereby the comfort and character of the English population. But we desire the abolition of legal charity, because we honestly believe that it has abridged the one and wofully deteriorated the other."

Many people are inclined to favour bold designs and compulsory measures in the belief that they must always have an advantage in power and resources over the voluntary efforts of individuals. This Chalmers utterly denies. Comparing the poor relief of a Scottish village with that of one in England, where it cost sixty times as much, he says: "The preventive regimen of the one country does more than the positive applications of the other." And, in like manner, it will be found that in every department the natural is stronger, as well as healthier, than any artificial system. "It is well, indeed, that both

[1] The Poor Rate for England and Wales in 1898 amounted to £10,828,276.

the council of a city and the great council of a nation should be told what an arm of impotency it is that they often put forward." Taking the instance of a grant of over a million pounds from government for the building of churches, he expresses the fear that it will cut off a larger revenue that might have been derived from local sources.

"This is the precise mischief which is to be apprehended in the case of every wide and general superintendence. The more wide and the more general, the means will be *absolutely* greater, and the effort for the accomplishment of any given object will also be absolutely greater: and this is enough to fill and to satisfy the imaginations of all, who look no farther than to the measure itself, and have not patience nor arithmetic for computing the proportion which it bears to the evil it is meant to remedy. But *relatively* to the whole amount of what ought to be done, will it come greatly short of what many individuals would do for their own local districts, and many corporations would do for their own townships. For the purpose, however, of calling out these latter to the full stretch of their means and energies, it is necessary that there should be no delusive expectation of aid from a higher quarter, so as that they should feel the full weight of the responsibility which lies upon them." And again: "When the good proposed to be done is for the special behoof of one city parish,

or even one department of a city parish, this carries a far more forcible appeal than any general object would, to all those connected with it, either by office, or by property, or by residence. It is felt by all such as a directly pertinent application, and so, both in respect of agency and of subscription, calls forth a host of latent capabilities that, under a general system would never have been reached and never have been entered upon. There can be no doubt that the more you subdivide a territory into districts, the more intense and the more productive will be the operation in each of them. . . . And therefore it is that we contemplate a great national effect, not as the result of any corporate movement, or any legislative operation, but as the result of a slow accumulative process, helped forward mainly by the growth and expansion of Christian philanthropy in our land, and at length completed into a whole by the simple apposition of parts done separately and done independently."

The foregoing considerations are worthy to be emphasised in the present day when, alongside of many good workers, there exists so large a body of superficial thinkers and incompetent advisers. These are the men who possess "the ambition to plan beyond the ability to execute"—whose delight it is to "superficialise over a whole city." Thanks to their influence, it is still true to a very great extent that "the prevailing tendency has been to attempt great

things rather than to do small things thoroughly and well." As a result, much "zeal for the good of humanity is now dissipated and lost among vague generalities. . . . The eyes of a fool, says Solomon, are towards all the ends of the earth"; and "certainly there is a vague and vagrant philanthropy in our day which loses much of its energy in its diffusiveness, and which it were far better to fasten, and to concentrate, and to confine within the limits of a small locality."

But the waste of effort is not the worst evil. The consequences of mistaken interference are apt to defy our calculations. We aim at a definite improvement by a simple device or enactment, and find that we have set a number of forces in motion which act with far greater energy in the opposite direction. Then one change follows another, in the wake of the original disturbance. This is the fate of all benevolent schemes which are intended to benefit people in the mass. "The more that you generalise the administration of the poor, the more does it stand before the eye of the population in the imposing characters of power and of magnitude; and the delusive confidence which they are thus led to place in its resources is one of the main feeders of pauperism. And again, the more also, in this way, do you widen the distance between the dispensers and the recipients of charity, adding

thereby to the helplessness of the former, and giving far more advantageous scope and licence to the dexterity of the latter—and on this second principle too, do you behold another and most copious feeder of pauperism. Or if, to escape the evil here, you have separate administrations, but all hanging on a common fund, then you relax the care and vigilance of the subordinate managers in the concern—for never is any business so well economised, when you can draw indefinitely for the expenses of it out of a large and general reservoir, as when its own peculiar charges must be defrayed out of its own peculiar resources. It was on these most obvious considerations, as sound, we trust, as they are simple, that I longed and laboured with all my might for the dissolution of all general funds and general jurisdictions in city pauperism, thoroughly persuaded that with a very humble fraction of the old expenditure, the same thing could be better done under the economy of local and independent managements."

In the closing words of this sentence we find the key to that gradual "accumulative process" which Chalmers so keenly advocated. He believed in the division of labour, and of the field of labour. He speaks of the "charm and might of locality," and is never tired of dwelling on the advantages of a "territorial system" and a "geographical vineyard."

By the employment of trained workers in small areas he will find a solution of the whole problem.

This, it may be said, is very well in theory. The principle of locality, no doubt, works admirably in a village community; it may probably be adapted to country towns of moderate size; it can have no application to the great industrial centres into which our people are more and more congregated every day.

Chalmers admits the contrast between large and small towns, and the difficulties arising out of it. "In a provincial capital, the great mass of the population are retained in kindly and immediate dependence on the wealthy residenters of the place. It is the resort of annuitants, and landed proprietors, and members of the law and other learned professions, who give impulse to a great amount of domestic industry by their expenditure; and on inquiring into the sources of maintenance and employment for the labouring classes there, it will be found that they are chiefly engaged in the immediate service of ministering to the wants and luxuries of the higher classes in the city. This brings the two extreme orders of society into that sort of relationship which is highly favourable to the general blandness and tranquillity of the whole population. In a manufacturing town, on the other hand, the poor and the wealthy stand more disjoined from each other. It is true they often meet,

but they meet more on an arena of contest than on a field where the patronage and custom of the one party are met by the gratitude and good-will of the other. . . . It must be quite obvious, from the nature of the case, that their intercourse is greatly more an intercourse of collision, and greatly less an intercourse of kindliness, than in such towns as Bath or Oxford or Edinburgh. . . . We cannot fail to perceive how . . . families may live together for years in a state of juxtaposition, and never exchange one note of acquaintanceship with each other. In the density of such a compact and crowded mass, individuals and families are scarcely within sight of each other."

But he does not give up his principle. In spite of all this, "we hold the possibility, and we cannot doubt the advantage, of assimilating a town to a country parish. We think that the same moral regimen which, under the parochial and ecclesiastical system of Scotland, has been set up, and with so much effect, in her country parishes, may by a few simple and attainable processes be introduced into the most crowded of her cities, and with as signal and conspicuous an effect on the whole habit and character of their population." The way to attain this desirable result is simply to break up the mass, to "reduce the city into manageable parts," and to employ within each of them "a numerous and well-appointed agency."

"In a small country parish, the minister alone, or

with a very few coadjutors of a small session, may bring the personal influence of his kind and Christian attentions to bear upon all the families. Among the ten thousand of a city parish this is impossible; and therefore, what he cannot do but partially and superficially in his own person must, if done substantially, be done in the person of others." Thus the city parish, like the city, was to be divided up into "manageable districts," which would be no larger than a small village. It may be added, that after much experience he arrived at the conclusion that "one individual might undertake for fifty families," and that no church should have more than 2000 people.

It would be rash, he says, to affirm that this plan could not be carried out in London. "A single lane or court in London is surely not more impracticable than in other towns of this empire. There is one man to be found there, who can assume it as his locality, and acquit himself thoroughly and well of the duties which it lays upon him. There is another who can pitch beside him, on a contiguous settlement, and, without feeling bound to speculate for the whole metropolis, can pervade, and do much to purify, his assumed portion of it. There is a third who will find that a walk so unnoticed and obscure is the best suited to his modesty; and a fourth who will be eager to reap on the same field that reward of kind

and simple gratitude in which his heart is most fitted to rejoice." So by the joint labours of many workmen the whole task may be at length accomplished.

Not only is the local system possible, it is the only one that can possibly succeed. "We know of no other expedient for the right solution of this great problem. We have no faith in a national board that undertakes for the pauperism of a whole empire, or in a provincial board that undertakes for the pauperism of a whole county, or in a city board that undertakes for the pauperism of a whole township, or in a union with its arrangements, however skilful, for the pauperism of a whole cluster of parishes. But with all our helplessness in these, we have the greatest confidence in the perfect facility and success wherewith every deacon possessed of kindly feelings and common-sense could manage aright the pauperism of fifty families. . . . We shall not meddle with matters too high for us; nor do we profess to understand by what mechanism it is that one body of general administration and surveillance can achieve aught so magnificent as the right apportionment of relief for all the manifold varieties of want and wretchedness in the thousand homes that lie scattered in a territory where tens of thousands of human beings are congregated, whether in large cities or extended provinces. But we do understand how an intelligent and well-principled man can, in a given locality of some few hundred people, so operate

on the springs and principles of human feeling and human action as to maintain in that economic condition, which is the best possible, all the families who are within its confines. We do not know what the one process is by which the result universal can be reached, of a right economy of pauperism for the millions of a whole nation. But we do know what the one process is by which the result particular can be reached, of a right economy of pauperism for the as many scores or fifties of a whole district. And our result universal is arrived at by the summation of these particulars. Give us a sufficient number of deaconries for each parish, and a sufficient number of parishes for an empire, and by the cheap attentions of as many men, each performing a most light and practicable task within his own little sphere, shall we make good piecemeal and in items the full accomplishment of that object which, dealt with as an unwieldy whole, has hitherto exercised and baffled the ingenuity of all our statesmen."

We may easily discern the reason why so much more can be achieved by organising local effort than by central regulation. "It makes all the difference between a distant and therefore superficial view on the one hand, and a thorough, we had almost said microscopical, inspection on the other—whether a number of parishes shall be thrown into one field of superintendence and placed under an elevated

board of directors, or each parish shall be broken down into a number of small and manageable sections, each given in charge to a friendly guardian who might hold weekly, it may be daily, converse with the families. Under the one economy they will reach to but a slender acquaintance with the inner mechanism of the subject on which they operate, and that notwithstanding their busy manufacture of programmes and queries and schedules of goodly enumeration. Their circulars and the returns to their circulars will not do much for them, but in all probability will leave these dealers in wholesale just as wise as before. Under the other economy, we open a way to the hidden privacies of the question, to the springs and principles of the living human nature concerned with it, and which form in reality the *ipsa corpora* of the whole problem —for the right discernment of which it is not a rare metaphysical acumen which is required; but the everyday intelligence and common-sense of men in ordinary life, so circumstanced as that they might have familiar access to the hearts and the homes of our population."

Two special criticisms may here be met. "It is felt by many as a deduction from the good of the local system in towns that the poorer among the families so frequently change their places of residence; and that there must not only be the same parish, but also the same parishioners—else the acquaint-

anceship which is formed will be constantly liable to be broken up by the constant dispersion of its members." This is certainly a great hindrance to charitable work in London and in other large manufacturing centres. But, in the first place, "the quantity of fluctuation is greatly overrated. . . . Many of the movements are internal, being from one small district of the parish to another. And besides, even though there were removals out of the parish every year at the rate of one-tenth of all the families in it, we are not to infer that in ten years there is a complete change of families, or that the old parish is thus scooped away by so many liftings of the people who live in it. The truth is, that the movement is far more a vibratory than a successive one. The families that leave a parish this year are, in a great measure, the very families that came to it last year. There is a certain number, and those chiefly of the worst-conditioned of the population, who are constantly upon the wing, and they alternate from one parish to another over the heads of a stable population. A locally parochial system would serve, in the long run, to retain even these; but even in their present amount they leave the great bulk of the inhabitants of every parish in a fixed and permanent state for any species of cultivation that might be applied to them."

The other point which has been urged is, that "the

distribution of wealth is very unequal over the face of every city; that it is greatly accumulated beyond the average in some districts, and that it is as greatly below it in others; and that if such a resolution of the management were to take place as that which is now recommended, the support of the opulent citizens, who cluster together in genteel and fashionable streets, would be utterly withdrawn from those portions of the town which are occupied by its artisans and its labourers." To this he has an easy rejoinder. "We assert that the positive administrations of relief which are now discharged from the richer to the more destitute portions of a populous city, do nothing but aggravate and inflame the mischief it is their direct object to do away; and if an expedient could be devised for intercepting this stream of communication from the upper to the lower ranks of society it would contribute not merely to the dignity of the latter, but to the abundance of their physical enjoyments. . . . It is quite vain to talk to us, in the way either of argument or objection, of a more equal apportionment of the burden of charity over a town, when it is our firm opinion that the burden might be lifted off altogether. . . . We state it as our most firm and intimate belief that there is not a single section of any city in Scotland of suitable dimensions for a distinct parish which contains not within itself all the capabilities of comfort and of maintenance for all its families."

Having disposed of these objections, he brings forward a real difficulty which is perhaps the chief obstacle to the adoption of his method. "There is a stubborn incredulity which, however widely it may appear to differ, is, in some respects, very much at one with sanguine Utopianism. It is true that the same magnificence which captivates the latter is that which is regarded by the former with derision and distrust. So that while the one is easily lured to a chimerical enterprise, and just because the object of it is great, it is this very greatness which freezes the other into hopeless and impracticable apathy. Yet both agree, in that they take a direct and instantaneous impression from the object itself, and are alike heedless of the immediate means by which it may be accomplished. It is thus that the splendid visionary is precipitated from his aerial flight, because he overlooked the utter pathlessness of that space which lay between him and the impossibility that he aspired after. But it is also thus that the fixed and obstinate practitioner refuses to move one single footstep, because he equally overlooks that continuous way which leads through the intervening distance to some great yet practicable achievement." There is much excuse for this "arch incredulity," because "the public ear has been so repeatedly assailed by the crudity, and the nostrum, and the splendid imagination of successive adventurers, so manifold have been the promising theories which

have passed, one after another, before the view of British society, and then passed away into utter abortiveness, that truly we cannot wonder if the general infidelity be now so strong as to have settled down into the attitude not merely of determined unbelief, but of downright listlessness." To overcome this feeling we have to show that even a great object may be attained by successive steps, and "though the mischief cannot be exterminated by a blow, it may by a process; and so the whole of our demand is not for a sublime power that shall inflict the one, but for a sober-minded patience that shall wait the result of the other. . . . But no sooner do we get rid of one antipathy than we are instantly met by another. The very men who have no credit for what is great have no value for what is gradual. . . . We do not see how it is possible to suit the taste of such people with any acceptable speculation on the subject of pauperism—sceptical as they are of any relief being practicable, and at the same time impatient as they are for that relief being universal."

Two forcible examples are given by Chalmers in illustration of the method of work which he recommends.

The first is that of the Saltmarket Sabbath School Society. He tells us that a proposal had been made for the simultaneous establishment of such schools over the whole of Glasgow. "It is greatly better,"

he says, "that this was abandoned. . . . To muster a force in any way adequate to the commencement of such an enterprise, there behoved to be a very wide and crowded arena of consultation on the subject; and this, to a moral certainty, would have turned out an arena of controversy, where, after a very great deal of unproductive speechifying, the parties would have neutralised each others' propositions, and the project been given up in despair. Even though it had been possible to institute a society for this object, the work of filling up the city with local schools would have gone on most languidly," owing to a sense of the magnitude of the task, and a lack of united energy among the numerous persons engaged in it. In fact, "in proportion to the sublimity of the aim, would have been the shortness and slenderness of the execution."

Meanwhile the Saltmarket Association had started in the opposite direction. The field of its operations included one street with numerous lanes branching out of it, and a population of 3624. "To cultivate this extent there were only four individuals at the outset of the undertaking, who, instead of spreading themselves over the whole, appropriated each a small locality, and waited for more agents ere they proceeded to lay out the remainder." They had the advantage of seeing the boundaries of their field of exertion, and taking up a task within their strength;

and they had also "the intense sympathy of a devoted few in the prosecution of their common and defined object." The result was "that in a few months this little association did both complete its numbers and thoroughly allocate and pervade the whole ground of its projected operations." Before long it had opened fourteen schools and provided them with teachers; it had also captured most of the children within its area, drawing them chiefly from a class that was "as completely untouched by the antecedent methods as are the families in the wilds of Tartary." He describes the civilising effect upon the children and their parents. "Certain it is that we never witnessed so rapid a cultivation. . . . But the most cheering part of the whole operation was the great and immediate effect of the local interest, in calling out a well qualified agency for the work."

The second instance is thus described:—

"Strong, however, as our partialities are for the Saltmarket Society, we are not sure but that we feel a still greater interest in the solitary, yet eminently successful, attempt of a gentleman in our city, whose name, from motives of delicacy, we forbear to mention. It is now about a year and a half ago since he assumed a district to himself, which he resolved to cultivate on the system of local philanthropy. We believe that, in respect of the rank and condition of those who live in it, it is greatly beneath the average

of Glasgow. It comprises a population of 996; whom he, in the first instance, most thoroughly surveyed, and all of whom, we are confident, he has now most thoroughly attached, and that by a series of the most friendly and enlightened services. He has found room within its limits for four Sabbath schools, which he provided with teachers of his own selecting, and who, like himself, labour of course gratuitously in the cause. . . . The scholars amount to 110. . . . He has also instituted a Savings Bank, which takes in deposits only from those who live, and from those who work, within the bounds of this little territory. With this last extension of his plan, the bank may embrace a population of 1200; and from its commencement in December 19th, 1818, to December 18th, 1819, the whole sum deposited is £235 12s. 3d. During the twelvemonth sixty families of this small district have opened their accounts with the bank, and received an impulse from it on the side of economy and foresight. This, in such a year, proves what might be made of the neglected capabilities of our labouring classes. Any general savings bank for the town at large would not have called out one-tenth of this sum from the obscure department which this gentleman occupies, and which, with the doings and devices of a most judicious benevolence, he is so fast rescuing from all the miseries which attach to a crowded population. We hold this to

be one of the most signal triumphs of locality. The sum deposited in this local bank is about proportional to the sum of £30,000 for the town and suburbs of Glasgow; and forms another proof, among the many others which multiply around us, of the superiority, in point of effect, which a small and at the same time distinct and unfettered management holds over a wide and ambitious superintendence."

This chapter may be fitly closed by a very fine passage in which the rival forces are contrasted. The spirit of the orator breaks forth in eloquence, as he looks forward to the ideal of a nation "recovered from vice and violence, and placed conclusively beyond the reach of all moral and all political disorders."

"This result will at length be arrived at, not by the working of one mighty organisation for the achievement of great things, but by the accumulation of small things—not by men whose taste it is to contemplate what is splendid in philanthropy, but by men whose practical talent it is, to do what is substantial in philanthropy—not by men who eye, with imaginative transport, the broad and boundless expanse of humanity, but by men who can work in drudgery and in detail, at the separate portions of it. But, before we can sit down and be satisfied with doing, thoroughly and well, that which lies within the compass of our strength—there must be a conquest over the pride of our nature—there must be a calling

in of the fancy from those specious generalities, which have lured so many from the path of sober and productive exertion—we must resign the glory of devising a magnificent whole; and count it enough to have rendered, in our narrow sphere and in our little day, the contribution of a part to the good of human society. The whole it is only for Him to contemplate fully, whose agents we are, and who assigns a portion of usefulness to each severally, as He will. It is our part to follow the openings of His Providence, and to do, with our might, the work which He hath evidently put into our hands. Any great moral or economical change in the state of a country is not the achievement of one single arm, but the achievement of many; and though one man, walking in the loftiness of his heart, might like to engross all the fame of it, it will remain an impotent speculation, unless thousands come forward to share among them all the fatigue of it. It is not to the labour of those who are universalists in science, that she stands indebted for her present solidity, or her present elevation, but to the separate labours of many—each occupying his own little field, and heaping, on the basis of former acquisitions, his own distinct and peculiar offering. And it is just so in philanthropy. The spirit of it has gone marvellously abroad amongst us of late years; but still clouded and misled by the bewildering glare which the fancy of ambitious man

is apt to throw around his own undertakings. He would be the sole creator of a magnificent erection, rather than a humble contributor to it, among a thousand more, each as necessary and important as himself. And yet, would he only resign his speculations, and give himself to the execution of a task to which his own personal faculties were adequate, he would meet with much to compensate the loss of those splendid delusions which have hitherto engrossed him. There would be less of the glare of publicity, but there would be more of the kindliness of a quiet and sheltered home. He could not, by his own strength, advance the little stone into a great mountain, but the worth and the efficacy of his labours will be sure to recommend them to the imitation of many; and the good work will spread by example, from one individual and from one district to another; and though he may be lost to observation, in the growing magnitude of the operations which surround him, yet will he rejoice even in his very insignificance, as the befitting condition for one to occupy among the many millions of the species to which he belongs; and it will be enough for him that he has added one part, however small, to that great achievement, which can only be completed by the exertions of an innumerable multitude—and the fruit of which is to fill the whole earth."

CHAPTER II.

THE POOR LAW.

"There are two points which we consider as now admitted by all men of sense:—First, that the Poor Laws must be abolished; secondly, that they must be very gradually abolished."—*Sidney Smith.* 1820.

"There would be no need of laws to provide for distress if there were no laws to produce it."—*The Original.* 1835.

In the preceding chapter we have dealt with some of the general objections to the Poor Law, which it shares with other large institutions. We have now to consider its practical working and results.

First, it will be well to notice the circumstances under which Chalmers wrote, and the history of the introduction of the Poor Law into Scotland. The following particulars are taken from his evidence before the Parliamentary Committee in 1830.

It appears that as early as 1579 an Act was passed, founded on the English statute of the 15th of Elizabeth for the suppression of vagrancy. After the lapse of a hundred years, in the reign of William and Mary, a

very vigorous attempt was made, by means of two Acts and four proclamations, to enforce the erection of workhouses and the system of compulsory provision for the poor, which up to that time had remained a dead letter. Again in 1740 the law was found to be still inoperative; "it is certain that it was acted upon in very few parishes indeed prior to 1740." Several reasons are given for this. As yet the towns had been too poor to bear the cost of buildings, salaries, and management. Trade, agriculture, and manufactures were as yet undeveloped. There was also an Act permitting the alternative of begging under certain regulations, and this was preferred by all parties. Finally, "the progress of assessments was superseded or anticipated by the progress of education and good habits among the people." At the date of the inquiry in 1830 it was found that the legal system was at work in 152 parishes out of a total of between 900 and 1000; that these parishes belonged to the border counties, not 20 of them being to the north of the Forth and Clyde; that in some it had been tried and abandoned, but on the whole the process was advancing.

Two causes are assigned for this advance. "In the first place, I think it a very natural imagination, that should there be a vacancy or a deficit in respect of means, the patent way of supplying that vacancy is just to pour relief into it; and it is very natural to proceed upon that imagination when urged by a sense

of shortcoming in the supplies which are provided in a voluntary way. It is a very natural and frequent, though I think mistaken, imagination that an assessment will make good the deficiency."

Another cause is this. "There are many non-resident heritors in our parishes, and from a desire that the burden should be equalised between the resident and non-resident, the principle of assessment has been introduced, very much afterwards to the regret and repentance of all, when they found that it would have been far easier to bear the whole burthen of a gratuitous economy than the share only which fell to them of a compulsory system." Another witness gave the same testimony. "The great objection to the voluntary system of relieving the wants of the poor, and indeed the only one that was incessantly and clamorously dinned in my ears, was that the burden fell exclusively on the generous and philanthropic, while the penurious and hard-hearted escaped. But there was not much in this; for verily both will have their reward; and perhaps even the persons who so urgently pressed the objection, if they have not already, may come to be convinced that it would have been better for them to have 'borne the ills they knew of,' than to encounter those of which they had then no experience." The argument was repeated in the case of Ireland, and was one of the main causes of the introduction of a Poor Law into the Isle of Man in

1888. Rightly regarded, it tells upon the other side; but, says Chalmers, "we have to come to that conclusion by an inferential process, which practical men in general do not make: they act more upon impulse than upon reason, upon the force of that consideration which is most obvious, and which first impresses itself."

In the unassessed parishes of Scotland the fund for relief was mainly derived from the weekly offerings of the people, collected in a plate at the church door, and it was distributed almost entirely at the discretion of the minister and kirk-session. "In some instances, the collection is made more effective by its being received within doors, the elders carrying about what they call a ladle, and making pointed and personal application with it to each individual before the dismissal of the congregation. That method obtains, however, in comparatively a small number of Scottish parishes." Where the assessment prevailed, the fund was distributed by a body composed of the heritors, or landed proprietors, and the kirk-session; it was found that the voluntary contributions were speedily diminished, while at the same time a feeling grew up among the people that they had a right to relief. Figures are added to show the very great increase in expenditure, which, under the old system, did not exceed an average of £40 a year for every 1000 inhabitants, "whereas, in such of the English parishes as we have had access to, the distribution amounts to

from £500 to £1500 per annum, on an equal population." A Report of the General Assembly is quoted for particulars of the various districts, and shows that "the wants of the poor have gradually and progressively increased" wherever the assessment has been introduced.

Against this system of a legal provision for the destitute Chalmers waged a life-long war. It was utterly opposed to his convictions on the subject of charity and the welfare of the poor. No words were strong enough to express his detestation of it. He fought against it with tongue and pen and practical example. His extraordinary power and industry, his commanding eloquence, his organising ability, his influence as minister and professor—all were pressed into the service. Living at a time of transition, he was in the best position for comparing the effects of voluntary and compulsory relief. He took infinite pains to ascertain the facts in England as well as at home. He found in those facts an absolute condemnation of the Poor Law, and in the work of his own parishes he proved it to be unnecessary.

Hitherto little justice has been done him as the preacher of this crusade. Students, biographers, and lecturers have quoted many of his sentiments with approval, where they could agree with them, but have passed lightly over the main endeavour of his life. It was not that he could find abuses, or suggest

improvements here and there. The whole system was rotten; it was "replete with all sorts of mischief"; it was "the result of a very bungling attempt on the part of the Legislature to do that which would have been better done had Nature been left to her own free processes, and man to the unconstrained influence of such principles as Nature and Christianity have bestowed upon him." This was his firm opinion, and if there be any truth in it, now, more than ever, does that truth need to be asserted. We know that his efforts failed. The labours of the Poor Law Commission, while they removed certain gross abuses, established the system on a more permanent basis than before in England under a Central Board, with a vast and elaborate local machinery; and very soon Ireland and Scotland were brought under its dominion. Since that time its voluminous history has set forth all the evils which must arise from building on a false foundation; and the many able men and women who have devoted their energies to the work of this department have been forced to feel the hopeless nature of their service. If we survey the country after more than half a century, we find a few examples of strict administration, under which the main body of the poor can retain their independence, and numberless instances of lax administration under which they are degraded. We find more and more powers entrusted to the Guardians, more and more

encroachments on the field of charity. Amendment is followed by reaction, and endless new regulations are devised in the vain hope of reducing the mischief inseparable from a vicious system. Who that has had experience of our Poor Law can regard it as satisfactory? The question of the proper treatment of distress is indeed one of very great difficulty, and we can imagine no method that would be free from the peril of abuse. We may regard our present arrangement as inevitable, and not more injurious than other possible alternatives; or we may feel with Chalmers that the worst of all plans that can be adopted is the legal establishment and endowment of distress. The evils of a voluntary system are at least amenable to the spirit of progress, and may yield to improvement as wiser views prevail; but the State system has become so rigidly defined, so completely organised, and so firmly rooted in the land, that it appears to be immovable by any process short of a revolution. There is much talk of "Poor Law reform" in these days, but always in the sense of Poor Law extension; yet here the only true reform is abolition. It will be well at any rate to examine the evidence for this opinion, and if possible to bring home the forcible arguments of Chalmers to some minds at a time when every new suggestion is for a wider application of the theory that the government should be the guardian of the people.

He begins by exposing the false basis of the Poor Law. "We have long thought that by a legal provision for indigence, two principles of our moral nature have been confounded, which are radically distinct from each other—distinct both objectively in the ethical system of virtue, and subjectively in the laws and workings of the human constitution. These two principles are humanity and justice, whereof the latter is the only proper object of legislation—which, by attempting the enforcement of the former, has overstepped altogether its own rightful boundaries. It is right that justice should be enforced by law, but compassion ought to have been left free; and the mischief that has practically ensued from the violation of this obvious propriety, strikingly evinces the harmony of the abstract with the concrete in the constitution of our actual world, insomuch that derangement and disorder will inevitably follow whenever the natural laws of that microcosm which each man carries in his own breast are thwarted by the dissonancy of those civil or political laws, by which it is often so vainly attempted to improve on the designs of the Great Architect, when the inventions of man are suffered to supersede the great principles of truth and nature in the mechanism of human society."

The reasons for this distinction may easily be understood. "The claims of justice are definite and precise, and withal strictly accordant to the natural

sense of morality; so that the law which enforces these, while it compels the observance of certain intelligible limits and lines of demarcation, is acquiesced in by the general mind of society. But the law which would enforce charity can fix no limits, either to the ever-increasing wants of a poverty which itself hath created, or to the insatiable desires and demands of a population, whom itself hath corrupted and led astray. Under this system all is lax and precarious and indefinite."

Chalmers declares his opposition to the doctrine of the socialist. "Whatever the calls be, which the poverty of a human being may have on the compassion of his fellows—it has no claims whatever upon their justice. . . . The proper remedy, or remedy of nature, for the wretchedness of the few, is the kindness of the many. But when the heterogeneous imagination of a right is introduced into this department of human affairs, and the imagination is sanctioned by the laws of the country, then one of two things must follow—either an indefinite encroachment on property, so as ultimately to reduce to a sort of agrarian level all the families of the land; or, if to postpone this consequence a rigid dispensation be adopted, the disappointment of a people who have been taught to feel themselves aggrieved, the innumerable heart-burnings which law itself has conjured up, and no administration of that

law, however skilful, can appease." An error like this might well be denounced in the language used by a statesman of the Slave Trade. "Pauperism in so far as sustained on the principle that each man, simply because he exists, holds a right on other men or on society for existence, is a thing not to be regulated but destroyed. Any attempt to amend the system which reposes on such a basis will present us with but another modification of that which is radically and essentially evil."

To many minds the view here expressed is preferable to the doctrine of a right. They would accept the premises but stop short of the conclusion. Admitting the abnormal nature of such legislation, they would defend it as inevitable under the complicated circumstances of modern life. This is the attitude of most men towards the Poor Law; they regard it as an evil, but a necessary evil. "You are right," they would say, "in theory, but when it comes to practice we cannot let people starve; the needy must be fed and sheltered. Charity is weak, uncertain, and emotional; we must have something more solid to depend upon." Chalmers asserted the direct opposite. He reminded them "how closely associated fear is with indistinct vision." He maintained that the resources of Self-Help and the Charity of Nature were far more powerful and abundant than any provision which the Charity of Law could make.

In the absence of the latter, starvation was impossible; the working class would flourish; and charity could be made efficient and reliable. "The introduction of legal assessments has paralysed the whole of this machinery"; and it is difficult for those who have lived in the unwholesome atmosphere of a Poor Law, even to imagine how a nation might thrive under healthier conditions.

The argument is well worked out in his favourite metaphor of THE FOUR FOUNTAINS, "now frozen or locked up by the hand of legislation," and the innumerable refreshing rills that would instantly break forth from them, if it were withdrawn.

"*The first*, and by far the most productive of these fountains, is situated among the habits and economies of the people themselves. It is impossible but that an established system of pauperism must induce a great relaxation on the frugality and provident habits of our labouring classes. It is impossible but that it must undermine the incentives to accumulation, and by leading the people to repose that interest on a public provision which would else have been secured by the effects of their own prudence and their own carefulness, it has dried up far more abundant resources in one quarter than it has opened in another."

The effect of public charity on self-reliance is too well known to stand in need of proof. "Nothing

can be more natural . . . than that the care thus taken of each man by the legislature should lessen his own care of himself." It acts in opposition to "what has been termed the strongest law of nature—even the law of self-preservation. It tends to supersede the care and industry which . . . a man might have otherwise put forth, in labouring to realise a sufficiency for himself and for his children." So also with the practice of saving, of which more will be said in Chapter IV. A man will not deny himself in order to obtain that which would otherwise be given to him. He will look for some direct and personal advantage as the reward of his effort. "The self-denial which foregoes or gives up a present enjoyment, must, to become general, be palpably for the sake of one's own future benefit, and not . . . for the relief or benefit of ratepayers, who are viewed by the common people of England in the light of natural enemies." If this last expression appears too strong for our milder age, it may at least be said that they are viewed as legitimate objects of plunder. "We do not say that a poor-rate will extinguish the habit of accumulation, for innumerable instances can be alleged of the contrary. But it is enough for our argument that it powerfully tends to weaken and reduce the habit; and accordingly there are thousands and thousands more of the working classes in England who have a perfect

scorn for Savings Banks—and that on the express ground of their being institutions set up by the rich, not for the benefit of the lower orders, but to save their own pockets." Here we have the familiar doctrine of a "ransom," supposed to be due from rich to poor that the former may be permitted to enjoy their property in peace. Whether put forward with "a perfect scorn," or secretly entertained, there can be no doubt that the feeling is very prevalent. Such an incident as the following must be of frequent occurrence. "A poor woman at Clapham, near London, whose daughter had begun to put into the Saving Bank, said to her, 'Why, how foolish you are! It is all a contrivance of the rich to save their own pockets. You had much better enjoy your own money, and when you want, they will take care of you?' The daughter *did* withdraw from the Saving Bank."

"*The second Fountain* which pauperism has a tendency to shut, and which its abolition would re-open, is the kindness of relatives." The law of family affection is one of the oldest and most powerful in the history of the human race. "And, besides this, there is a certain sentiment of pride which comes in aid of the more intense kindness that operates within the limits of a common household, or, more extended still, of a common kindred, though parted into separate domestic establishments—

and in virtue of which many a sacrifice is made to support and to save each other from the degradations of charity, so long as charity is not legalised. But both affection and honour give way before the temptations of a public and authorised provision for the relief of indigence; and accordingly in England, under its late, and still under its present parochial economy, there do occur the most scandalous desertions of very near relatives, and which, by the force of habit and under the countenance of general example, have ceased to be scandalous there. . . . It is this which gives rise to the melancholy list of runaway parents. . . . And then, as if in retaliation, there is the cruel abandonment of parents by their own offspring to the cold and reluctant hand of public charity. . . . We have not met with a testimony more universal throughout the whole of England, than that which relates to the perfect unconcern wherewith the nearest kinsfolk abandon each other to a poor's house. In most parishes there is a great preference on the part of paupers for a place on the out-pension list, though it be only a partial maintenance which is afforded, to an entire support within the walls of the workhouse. I was informed, however, at Bury in Lancashire, that some very old out-pensioners, who had been admitted as inmates with the families of their own children, often preferred the workhouse, because,

on purpose to get altogether quit of them, their children made them uncomfortable. This is very much of a piece with the general depositions that are to be had everywhere on the subject." Thus has the artificial system "poisoned the strongest affections of nature; and turned inwardly, towards the indulgences of an absorbent selfishness, that stream which else would have flowed out on the needy of our own blood and our own kindred. It has shut those many avenues of domestic kindliness by which, but for its deadening and disturbing influence, a far better and more copious circulation of needful supplies would have been kept up throughout the mass of society."

Two cases may be quoted from his experience to show the action of a wise charity in reviving the natural state of things and awakening a sense of duty on the part of relatives. The first is "that of an aged person who, disabled from his ordinary work, made repeated applications for parochial relief, which were as repeatedly evaded, on the knowledge that he had competent and respectable kinsfolk, of whom we felt assured that they only needed a fair and candid representation of the matter—and we have no doubt that they did acquit themselves rightly of all their natural obligations. Was it wrong, we ask, to devolve the application on this quarter—and we appeal to the surviving relatives,

now that the applicant is in his grave—whether they do not look back with truer satisfaction, than they would otherwise have felt, that a father and an uncle has been borne onward to the termination of his earthly career, in a style of independence which does honour to all the members of his family?"

The second he calls "a very fine example of the natural sufficiency that there is among the people, under even the most trying of domestic reverses. A family of six lost both parents by death. There were three children unable to provide for themselves, and the other three were earning wages. On an impression that they were not able to maintain themselves, application was made by them, to their elder, for the admittance of the three youngest into the Town Hospital; where, at the average of indoor pensioners, their maintenance would have cost at least twenty pounds a year. He remonstrated with them on the evil of thus breaking up the family—on the duty of the older to see after the education and subsistence of the younger branches—and on the disgrace it would bring to them, by consigning their younger brothers and sisters to pauperism. He assured them that they would find comparatively little difference, in the sum which it required to maintain them, when they all remained together; and offered them a small quarterly allowance, so long as they should feel it necessary, would they try the experiment of keeping

together, and helping on each other to the best of their ability. They gave way to this right moral suasion, and application for the stipulated quarterly sum was only made twice. Thus, by a trifling expenditure, a sum at least fifty fold was saved to the Town Hospital. But the worth of such management to the habit and condition of the family cannot be estimated in gold. Who is there that does not applaud the advice, and rejoice in the ultimate effect of it? We could hold no sympathy either with the heart or understanding of him who should censure such a style of proceeding—and our conceptions lie in an inverse order from his altogether, of the good, and the better, and the best, in the treatment of human nature."

"*A third Fountain*, on which pauperism has set one of its strongest seals, and which would instantly be unlocked on the abolition of the system, is the sympathy of the wealthier for the poorer classes of society. It has transformed the whole character of charity, by turning a matter of love into a matter of litigation; and so has seared and shut many a heart out of which the spontaneous emanations of goodwill would have gone plentifully forth among the abodes of the destitute." It has opened a "gulf of separation between the rich and poor." It has placed them in the position of adversaries, "the one party challenging what they feel to be their rightful allowances; the

other resisting what they fear to be interminable, and at length ruinous demands . . . Compassion on the one side and gratitude on the other are alike unknown. The golden line of life, reaching from the apex of society to its basement, is dissevered."

We cannot perhaps fully realise the bitterness of the hostility which was aroused by the old Poor Law; but in a modified form the same effects are very widely prevalent. The following evidence is given by a Scottish clergyman in whose parish the rate had been introduced. It is exactly applicable to the present day. "What the law of man says to the owner of property is, 'The proportion of the assessment which has been laid upon you must be paid. There is no escaping from it. You must either pay or go to prison. Your excuses cannot be listened to. We all have burdens. Your poor cousins may go to the kirk-session, and they are obliged to relieve them.' Well, what follows? The assessment is paid—in many cases sulkily, in some inconveniently; and the advice tendered is literally taken, and their poor dependants, who were formerly fed and clad by them, and whose wants were never heard of before, are thrown on the public for relief." The very existence of a poor rate provides a substitute for personal responsibility. This obvious fact is openly asserted by many people, and silently acted upon by many more. Even charitable associations,

which might otherwise learn to perfect their work, are compelled to adapt it to the law of the land, and to dismiss a large number of cases of distress as proper subjects for the Guardians who have been appointed to deal with them.

"But there is *still another Fountain*, that we hold to be greatly more productive than the last, both in respect to the amount of relief that is yielded by it, and also in respect to the more fit and timely accommodation wherewith it suits itself to the ever varying accidents and misfortunes of our common humanity. There is a local distance between the wealthy and the poor, which is unfavourable to the operation of the last fountain, but this is amply compensated in the one we are about to specify;—and some may be surprised when we intimate that, of far superior importance to the sympathy of the rich for the poor, do we hold to be the sympathy of the poor for one another. . . . There is a common feeling among the men of the operative classes, inspired by the very condition which they in common occupy; for fellowship with one in his lot is felt as a sort of claim to fellowship with him in his love and liberality." So powerful is this feeling that "we can venture to affirm, and to the infinite honour of the lower orders of society, that all which the rich give to the poor in private beneficence, is but a mite and a trifle when compared with what the poor give

to one another." And the observer who makes a careful study of the poorest district "will be sure to conclude that, after all, the best safeguards against the horrors of extreme poverty have been planted by the hand of nature, in the very region of poverty itself."

The subject is one on which Chalmers was very fond of dwelling. "It is not to be told how much is given and received throughout the families, even of the poorest localities, by the internal operation of charity amongst themselves. It is true that the contributions of each might be individually small, but this is made up for by their number and constancy. It is quite palpable, even on the most cursory observation, how mutually helpful, by personal service and attendance, they are to each other, in seasons of sickness; but it requires much intercourse, and a very intimate acquaintance with the habitudes of the poor who are congregated together in the same community, to be made sure of their great mutual generosity, in imparting, from their own scanty share of the necessaries of life, to the naked and the hungry, and the members whether old or young of those bereaved households whom the hand of death has deprived of their parents or natural protectors. . . . This fully accords with my own experience, when a minister in Glasgow, where I had a parish of 10,000 people, the poorest of the poor; and where,

from instances too numerous to be mentioned, I learned the delightful lesson—that the spontaneous charity of neighbours for each other was a more certain as well as more abundant source of relief, in cases of extreme indigence, than that legal charity, by which, when in full operation, the other is well-nigh superseded. Never did a case occur without the most timely forthgoings of aid and sympathy from the immediate neighbours—insomuch that I have often expressed it as my confidence, that, if surrounded by human eyes and human ears, I had no fear of human feelings being also awakened, so as to make it a moral impossibility that any man should starve in the sight of his fellows.

"Perhaps the most vivid illustration of this cheering truth in the history of our nature is to be gathered from Buxton's *Tour through the Prisons of Great Britain.* The legal allowance of bread to the prisoners varies at different places. In Bristol it was below the par of human subsistence. The allowance was too small for the criminals; and for the debtors there was no allowance at all. The prisoners of the latter class, therefore, are left, either to the assistance of their friends or to the charity of the public. But it occasionally happened that both these resources failed them—when they would have inevitably perished of hunger but for the generosity of the criminals, who, rather than brook the spectacle

of a fellow-creature suffering under one of the sorest agonies of nature, shared their own scanty pittance along with them. This I hold to be one of the finest examples which can be quoted of the strength of human compassion—proving that it survives the depraving process which conducts a criminal to his cell. We have only to carry back this experience from prisons to parishes, in order to be convinced of the safety, wherewith the evils of extreme want might generally be left to the workings of individual sympathy in every neighbourhood where they occur. If a man in the agonies of hunger, and giving authentic tokens of this sore distress, be within sight and hearing of his fellows—then, by an urgent and irrepressible law of nature, do they feel the promptings of a desire to relieve him which they are unable to resist. But not if a law of the state have ordained its own prescribed and authoritative method of relieving. Such a law has practically the effect of absolving every man from the obligation of caring for his neighbours."

The following case very clearly shows the power of the poor to help each other. It "is that of a weaver, who, though he had sixpence a day as a pension, was certainly put into circumstances of difficulty, when, two winters ago, in a season of great depression, the typhus fever made its deadly inroads upon his household. His distress was, in the highest

degree, striking and noticeable; and it may, therefore, look strange that no sessional movement was made toward the relief of so afflicted a family. Our confidence was in the sympathies and kind offices of the immediate neighbourhood; and we felt quite assured that any interference of ours might have checked or superseded these to such a degree as would have intercepted more of aid than is ever granted by the most liberal and wealthiest of all our public institutions. An outcry, however, was raised against us, and we felt compelled, for our own vindication, to investigate as far as we could the amount of supplies that had been rendered, and actually found that it exceeded at least ten times the whole sum that would have been allowed in the given circumstances out of the fund raised by assessment. It reconciled us the more to our new system, when given to understand that the most liberal of all the benefactions was called forth by the simple information that nothing had been done by any of the legal or parochial charities; nor did we meet with anything more instructive in the course of those inquiries than the obvious feeling of each contributor that all he had given was so very insignificant. And it is just so that the power of individual benevolence is greatly underrated; each is aware how incommensurate his own offering is to the necessity in question, and would therefore desiderate or demand a public administration

of relief, else it is feared that nothing adequate has been done. He never thinks of that arithmetic by which it can be computed that all the private offerings of himself and others far outweigh that relief which, had it issued from the exchequer of a session or an almshouse, would have arrested those numerous rills of beneficence that are sure to flow in upon every case of visible destitution or distress from the surrounding vicinity."

Another case is even more significant. "I remember going into one of the deepest and most wretched recesses in all Glasgow, where a very appalling case of distress met my observation—that of a widow whose two grown-up children had died within a day or two of each other. I remember distinctly seeing both their corpses on the same table; it was in my own parish. I was quite sure that such a case could not escape the observation of neighbours; I always liked to see what amount of kindness came spontaneously forth upon such occasions, and I was very much gratified to learn, a few days after, that the immediate neighbours occupying that little alley or court laid together their little contributions, and got her completely over her Martinmas difficulties. I never found it otherwise, though I have often distinctly observed that whenever there was ostensible relief obtruded upon the eyes of the population they did feel themselves discharged from a responsibility for

each other's wants, and released from the duty of being each other's keepers; and this particular case of distress met the observation of the Female Society at Glasgow, which society bears upon the general population, and with a revenue of some hundreds a year, from which it can afford very little in each individual instance, besides the impossibility of having that minute and thorough acquaintance with the cases that obtains under a local management. I remember having heard that a lady, an agent of that society, went upstairs to relieve this widow, and gave all that the Female Society empowered her to give, which was just five shillings. The people, observing this movement, felt that the poor woman was in sufficient hands, and that they were now discharged from all further responsibility. So that the opening of this ostensible source of relief closed up far more effectual sources, that I am sure would never have failed her."

From the evidence of the clergyman already quoted, it may be seen how the legal system puts an instant check on the kindness of the poor to one another. After describing the operations of that kindness at some length, he says that it was the regular mode of providing for the wants of those in distress during the whole course of his ministry, "down to the very day when poor-rates, even in a modified shape, were unhappily introduced among us. It was then

that a sudden change in the feeling of his parishioners took place. So soon as they were made aware that proprietors of houses rented at the trifling sum of three or four pounds must pay their share of the public assessment for the support of the poor, it was immediately inferred, that, when cases of destitution occurred in their vicinity, the burden of relieving it no longer lay upon them; and so quickly has the lesson been learned, that it was but the other day, when a neighbour's assistance was asked to do some kindly office to a sick man, she declared, that, now the poor-rates were laid on, she would not lay a hand upon the dying man—no, not so much as to assist in turning him in his bed—till she was informed who was to pay her. The advice of neighbours and of landlords is, 'Go to the kirk-session: state your case to them—they are bound to listen to your application.'"

Before quitting the subject of the four fountains, it may be well to point out that the legal system not only removes the motive for economy and benevolence but also actually reduces the power to exercise these virtues. "Every additional impost that is laid upon me in the shape of poor's rate, lessens my ability to support those industrious who are remunerated for their services by my expenditure. Supplies are provided for the destitute in one quarter of society, at the expense, not of my enjoyments alone,

but of privations to those who minister these enjoyments in another quarter of society. And, accordingly, it has been well observed, that, for all the visible relief effected by a poor's tax, there is as much of real though unseen poverty created among those, who have not yet entered within the territory of pauperism, but stand, a countless and untold multitude, around the very margin of it. The distress is not swept off from the face of the community. It is only shifted to another, and generally a far more deserving class of sufferers—to a mass of respectable families on the verge of destitution; struggling against the hard necessity of descending amongst the throng of sturdy applicants for a legalised charity; and all the more hopeless of relief, that the springs of gratuitous benevolence have been well-nigh dried up, by the heavy impositions which the artificial or compulsory system has laid on the upper classes of society. It is thus, that, by a sort of festering and spreading operation, the sphere of destitution is constantly widening in every parish where the benevolence of love has been superseded by the benevolence of law."

In spite of argument and illustration it will be felt by many persons, that however the ordinary difficulties of the poor may be met by ordinary means, there will always be hard cases which demand support from some public revenue. It is

true that we have quoted several cases of this kind, and shown the superior efficacy of the voluntary method of dealing with them. But these, it may be said, are a few special instances such as might be adduced in support of any proposition; though they were met by charity, it does not follow that similar need would always so be met; we cannot rely on anything less binding than a law. In answer to this objection, let us see how Chalmers would deal with some of the more difficult problems of charity, which are generally supposed to need the intervention of a law.

Enough has been said on the possible danger of starvation, which is increased and not diminished by a Poor Law. We take next the case of *Illegitimate Children*. Here, not even a kirk-session should intervene, much less the state. "In the case of exposed infants a necessity may be laid upon it"; but that is the only exception. "Sure we are that generally, and without outrage to any of our sympathies, the criminal parties may be safely left to the whole weight of a visitation that is at once the consequence and the corrective of their own transgression. We know not a more pitiable condition than that of a female who is at once degraded and deserted; but many are the reasons why it should be altogether devolved on the secret and unobserved pity, which it is so well fitted to inspire.

And we know not a more striking exhibition of the power of those sympathies, that we have so often quoted as being adequate, in themselves, to all the emergencies of human suffering, than the unfailing aid, and service, and supply wherewith even the child-bed of guilt is sure to be surrounded. It is a better state of things when, instead of the loud and impudent demand that is sometimes lifted upon such occasions, the sufferer is left to a dependence upon her own kinsfolk and neighbours, and to the strong moral corrective that lies in their very kindness towards her."

It is well known that this was one of the worst abuses under the old Poor Law, which so greatly encouraged vice, that the expenditure under this head reached one tenth of the whole. But the general argument is no less applicable to the present practice of treating such cases by indoor relief with all the comforts of a well-appointed Infirmary. "There is nought which more strikes and appals the traveller, who is employed in a moral or philanthropic survey of our land, than, not the gradual, but really instant transition which takes place in regard to this habit, when he passes out from the unassessed parishes of Scotland. The mischief done by the allowances of pauperism is not merely that they hold out to crime a refuge from destitution, but that they, in a certain measure, shield it from disgrace. A family visitation that would otherwise

be felt as an overwhelming calamity by all its members, falls lightly upon their feelings, and one of the greatest external securities to female virtue is demolished," because the culprit is "protected by law from the need of bringing a bane and a burden upon her relatives. . . . There can be no doubt that if you withdrew the bounty which is thus granted to vice . . . you would enlist the selfishness of parents on the side of the purity of their own offspring. The instant that it was felt to be more oppressive would it also be felt more odious: and as an early effect of the proposed reformation, should we witness both a keener popular indignation against the betrayer of innocence, and a more vigilant guardianship among families."

On another aspect of the same subject he observes, "There is a sensitive alarm sometimes expressed lest on the abolition of legal charity, there should be no diminution of crime; while the unnatural mothers, deprived of their accustomed resource, might be tempted to relieve themselves by some dreadful perpetration." This apprehension, he says, may be quelled by the experience of the parish of Gratney which was only separated from England by a small stream. The minister writes thus—"To females who bring illegitimate children into the world we give nothing. They are left entirely to their own resources. It is, however, a remarkable fact, that

children of this description with us are more tenderly brought up, better educated, and of course, more respectable, and more useful members of society than illegitimates on the other side of the Sark, who in a great many instances are brought up solely at the expense of their parishes."

"This comparison of parishes lying together in a state of juxtaposition, and differing only in regimen, proves with what fearlessness a natural economy might be attempted." The simple understanding that, in future, help would not be given, "would lay an instantaneous check on the profligate habits of the people. The action of shame, and prudential feeling, and fear from displeased, because now injured and oppressed relatives, would be restored to its proper degree of intensity and would be surely followed up by a diminution of the crime; and as to any appalling consequences that might be pictured forth on the event of crime breaking through all these restraints, for this too nature has so wisely and delicately balanced all the principles of the human constitution that it is greatly better to trust her than to thwart and interfere with her: she hath provided, in the very affection of the guilty mother for her hapless child, a stronger guarantee for its safety and its interest than is provided by the expedients of law."

Desertion is another offence for which no legal pro-

vision should be made; here also he regards the offence as the direct result of the provision.

"This unnatural desertion of their kinsfolk is the epidemic vice of England—only, however, because a legal guarantee against the starvation of those who are thus deserted is its epidemic temptation. It is in striking contrast with the general habit of Scotland, in the great majority of whose parishes such a guarantee is practically unknown; and where, almost universally, such an abandonment, either of parents by their own children, or of children by their own parents, would, as a thing of exceeding rare occurrence, be deemed a monstrous exception to the most binding duties, the most sacred proprieties of Christian and humanised life." In another place, he says, "I know not a single instance of a deserted family in an unassessed parish in Scotland." On the other hand, "we have seen whole columns of Manchester and other provincial newspapers filled with advertisements of runaway fathers and runaway husbands, in which they are described with all the particularity that is employed for the discovery of felons, and outlaws, and deserters from the army. And yet we are not to infer from this an utter negation of all the relative feelings on the part of these desperadoes. They know that their wives and children will not be permitted to starve, and in by far the greater number of instances, had this been the alternative, they

would have remained at home. They do not leave them destitute, for they leave them in possession of a right to subsistence. The affection which they have to their own kindred is still a rooted principle in their bosoms; and what might appear, at the first view, an act of unnatural cruelty, is often an act of collusion and good understanding between the fugitives and their families. The very prosecution by children, for a legal aliment in behalf of their aged parents, instead of being an unnatural surrender of duty on their part, is often urged forward by the same filial regard that would prompt them to the defence or prosecution of any other legal interest which belonged to them.

The results of cutting off the public assistance would be both safe and satisfactory. "In the case of a family that has been abandoned by its regardless and unnatural father, and where there is no suspected collusion between the parents, there is pity unmingled with reproach to the helpless sufferers. And our whole experience assures us that this pity would be available to a far larger and more important aid than is rendered on such occasions by any of the public charities in Scotland. The interference of the kirk-session has the effect of contracting the supplies within the limits of its own rigid allowance; and better even for the members of the deserted household that they had been suffered each to merge into such an asylum

of protection and kindness as the neighbourhood would have spontaneously afforded. But better still—there would, under such a regimen as this, be fewer instances of abandonment. The man who, without remorse, could leave his offspring to the charge of a public body, and a burden on a public fund, would need to have still more of the desperado in his heart ere he could leave them at random to the care of his old familiars in society. To the honour of our nature, there is a moral certainty in this latter case that there will be no starvation; but the sympathy of individuals will not be so often put to the trial of such a runaway experiment as would the care and responsibility of a kirk-session. And better, surely, that such an occurrence as this should be placed in the list of those casualties for which no legal provision has been made, than that anything in the institutions of our country should tend to slacken or to supersede the ties of relationship. In a community that had not been thrown into derangement by pauperism, the desertion of a family would be as rare and appalling a visitation as the destruction of their all by fire; and, like it too, would call forth as prompt and productive a sympathy from neighbours, while the indignation felt by all at the calamitous event in which all had been made to take an interest would strengthen the popular habit the more on the side of all the relative and family obligations."

On the subject of *Old Age*, it would be well for those who feel attracted by the pension schemes of the present day to take note of the following deliberate opinion. "We hold it neither wise nor salutary to have any such asylum" (as a Poor Law would provide) "for the impotency that springeth from age; for this is not an unforeseen exigency, but one that, in the vast majority of instances, could have been provided for by the care of the individual. And neither is it an exigency that is destitute of all resource in the claims and obligations of nature; for what more express, or more clearly imperative, than the duty of children? *A systematic provision for age in any land is tantamount to a systematic hostility against its virtues, both of prudence and of natural piety.*"

This goes to the root of the whole matter, and it should be particularly observed that Chalmers does not stop to inquire from what source the funds are to be derived, or whether the expense would be prohibitive. These are minor matters. He looks only to the interest of the people whom it is proposed to benefit, and on their account condemns the scheme as undesirable. In England we have long had that provision for the aged against which he protested, and the demand now is to have it in the most agreeable form, that of an allowance at home unaccompanied by any loss of position or respect. He gives the same opinion before the Parliamentary Committee: "I

think that old age is so much the general lot of human nature that it would strike too much into the providential habits of the poor to make anything like a regular and systematic provision for it."

A page from the record of St. John's Parish will throw some light on the grounds for this belief. "We have met with no one instance during nearly these three years of our separate administration out of which anything like an argument could be drawn for the practical necessity of a Town Hospital, or of any establishment that admitted indoor pensioners. There did, we understand, occur recently, in another parish of Glasgow, a case that might have alarmed a more indolent set of parochial rulers into the conclusion that some supplementary or extraneous institution of this sort was quite indispensable. An aged and infirm female was ordered away from her tenement by its proprietor, and, on inquiry, it was found that there did not exist a single earthly relative with whom she could be lodged. The patent way, in such circumstances, would have been to pass her to the Town Hospital, where she might have been received as one of the inmates. On making a round, however, amongst a few of the likeliest households in the vicinity, it was soon ascertained that an old woman, the solitary occupier of a humble apartment, would willingly admit her to a place at her fireside and the shelter of her roof for the very moderate allowance

of sixpence a week. Will any one say that the very comfort of this poor and interesting person was not more effectually consulted by an arrangement that served to domesticate her in a neighbourhood where she still found a harbour and a home on the field of general society, than if, transported thence, she had been doomed to breathe out the remainder of her days in the cheerless atmosphere and among the unhappy exiles of a poor's house? And, meanwhile, it may serve, perhaps, to rectify our notions of the apprehended necessity that there is for a Town Hospital, when made to know that, out of a nearly operative population of 15,000, there has not occurred in one-half of them a single instance of such necessity for about three years; and, in the other half, when there did occur, within the space of a twelvemonth, the threatening semblance of such a necessity, it was speedily dissipated by a few trifling inquiries. The friends and advocates of the parochial system were beginning to be a little fearful, from this solitary instance, of some mighty argument against their own favourite economy. But they were quieted again on finding that, for sixpence a week, they had purchased to themselves the entire benefit of a most decisive practical refutation."

From such passages it will be seen that the opinions of our author are not based on *a priori* reasoning; they are derived from a long and intimate acquaint-

ance with the life and habits of the poor. It is this which gives so much weight to the conclusions of Chalmers. He is not the blind advocate of some pet theory, but for every statement he has convincing proofs. His philosophy is altogether inductive; and his one standard is the real benefit of the people. "It might appear to many a harsh and unfeeling suggestion thus to withdraw the hand of public charity"—but what is our motive? "We are satisfied that both human crime and human suffering would be greatly abridged by it."

The next subject we select for illustration is that of *Exceptional Distress*,[1] which, after the lapse of all these years, is no better understood than it was in the days of Chalmers. Endless experiments have been made, and it would seem that every town and district must make its own experiments, and repeat them for the benefit of each succeeding generation. In the teeth of all experience, many persist in looking to the state or the municipality for the cure of evils which they can only aggravate; and in every cold winter or season of depression we are threatened with the recurrence of a scene of hopeless confusion. These facts give a special interest to the following reflections, in which it may be noticed that the year 1895 might be substituted with perfect accuracy for 1816.

"It has been imagined by many that a poor-rate is

[1] See also chap. iv., pp. 190-4.

particularly called for in those manufacturing towns where the people are so exposed to ebbs and alternations in their circumstances. . . . But, it is instructive to perceive, that, so far from a poor-rate being a sufficient remedy against vicissitudes of this sort, there never occurs a season of distressed trade and reduced wages when the heavily-assessed towns of England have not recourse to the very shifts that are practised in other places for meeting the adversity of the times, and when the symptoms of distress are not in every way as flagrant and appalling as they are anywhere in Scotland. In the calamitous winter of 1816-17, subscriptions were resorted to all over England, and soup kitchens were kept in busy operation, and urgent appeals were made to individual benevolence; and, in a word, as much of helplessness under their ordinary regimen for the poor, and as much of the need of a supplemental and extraordinary effort were felt in the very centre of pauperism as in those towns of Scotland where the compulsory method had scarcely begun to be acted on, or was altogether unknown. To quote examples were altogether superfluous. The thing was about universal in great towns, and very general even in populous villages. So that, in reference to the fluctuations of trade, pauperism has been also tried and found wanting, and that country which has tasted longest of its dispensations is, in seasons of commercial embarrassment, also put upon its shifts, and is on a

perfect level with other countries as to its distresses and its temporary plans."

We see then that, after all, "there is a mighty surplus of unrelieved want which remains to be provided for; and . . . let pauperism stretch forth her allowances and widen her occupancy as she may, there will constantly, over and above the whole extent of her operations, be as interminable an out-field as before for the duties and the services of a gratuitous philanthropy. The question is thus forced upon us, What service has been rendered to humanity by the poor-rate? It has obtained for England no discharge from the calls of a benevolence which might even have had a lighter task to perform had no such economy been instituted." For "it must be quite obvious that, though the necessity should be as great for an additional effort in such a season of extraordinary distress, yet that the ordinary burdens of pauperism must affect very sensibly both the means and the disposition of those on whom the effort and the sacrifices are laid."

"But the worst circumstance attendant on these extraordinary subscriptions is, that they leave behind them a permanent addition of ordinary pauperism. In places where there is no legal charity, they may leave no permanent depravation of habit behind them. After the last shilling is expended, the people are all remitted back again to their wonted independence; and not until the recurrence of a similar visitation

do they look for the supplies of charity from abroad. But the uniform experience of places where there is a compulsory provision is, that, in every instance of a subscription made for the people in bad times, there are so many thereby inured to the habit of receiving, and who thus find a readier way to the supplies of ordinary pauperism; and that there cometh thence a distinct accession on the poor-rate, from which even the return of prosperous times never has the effect of altogether relieving them. So that nothing can be more unsuitably assorted, the one with the other, than occasional subscriptions for seasons of extraordinary distress and a regular pauperism at all seasons. Wanting the latter, the former might with greater safety be raised more frequently and more abundantly, and so as to meet the varying circumstances of the people."

In the report of a Select Committee on the Poor Law in 1817, Chalmers finds further evidence against "the imagined necessity for it which lies in the peculiar state and circumstances of *a manufacturing population*." He learns from the report "that there is just as ready a principle of coalescence with this system on the part of the people in the agricultural districts; and that if we estimate the need for the fund by the extent of the drafts which are actually made upon it, there is little or no difference observable in England between the one and the other de-

scription of parishes. It further appears, . . . on comparing England and Scotland, that in manufacturing towns of various business and population, the extent of their pauperism is not at all in proportion to these circumstances, but in proportion to the time which the compulsory method has had for the development of its own mischievous principle of acceleration. We may gather also from this comparison, that, in times of great fluctuation or scarcity, the distress has always been much greater in towns where this method had long been established, and less in those where it had been recently instituted, and least of all in those where it was utterly unknown; all serving to prove that, under every variety of human condition and employment, this mischievous contrivance goes to supplant far more effectual securities against the sufferings of indigence than it can ever replace; and that, wherever it obtains a footing, it aggravates the distress which it proposes to do away; and that, let the mode of life or the mode of industry be what it will, individual man can far more easily find his own way to his own preservation from all the ills and vicissitudes of fortune without such a regulation than with it."

The advocate of a Poor Law cannot deny that wages are higher on the average in towns than in the country; but he urges that they are subject to greater variation. Therefore, "it is not to supply

a constant deficiency that the system is contended for in the trading towns of our nation but to equalise an occasional deficiency. Now we humbly conceive that, for this object, the plan of a regular and compulsory provision is the very worst that could possibly be devised. For, once establish this system, and there is not one attribute belonging to it that is more certain and more universally exemplified than its peculiar aptitude of growing; so that, even in the best of times, if you only take periods of sufficient length, as of ten years, you are sure to find that, in point of magnitude and oppressiveness, its increase justs keeps pace with the length of its duration. And, corresponding to this, there is a peculiar inaptitude in the system to retrograde; so that if in the worst of times the poor-rates are resorted to for the purpose of meeting some urgent and occasional visitation, they are sure to obtain from this circumstance, not an occasional but a permanent augmentation; and therefore, in this way, there is not a more effectual method of converting a temporary into a lasting burden on the community."

We have now touched on five problems of special difficulty, by way of illustration, and in each case we have found reason for accepting the conclusion of Chalmers "that legal charity is injurious, and in no way essential, to the well-being of any assembled population." So far from introducing a better state

of things, it is always "that which letteth and must be taken out of the way." So far from benefiting the poor, it "hath both whetted the appetency for relief and curtailed the supplies of it." As to the grounds on which it is thought to be necessary, surely, he says, it would be ridiculous to hold a lengthened argument for the purpose of showing that the people of England possess the same instincts of self-preservation and sympathy as the rest of their species. "But they are the parliament of England who first set the example of this strange incredulity. That Act of Elizabeth which has been extolled as a monument of English feeling, and English wisdom, is a monument of the legislature's fears, that neither feeling nor wisdom were to be found in the land. It is in fact the cruellest reproach which the government of a country ever laid upon its subjects. It is an enactment founded on a distrust of the national character—or, an attempt to supplement by law an apprehended deficiency in the personal, and the domestic, and the social virtues of Englishmen."

In spite of his strenuous opposition to State interference and his frequent denunciation of the Poor Law, Chalmers did not wholly rely on voluntary methods for improving the condition of the poor. We shall see that he was a strong believer in the principle of establishment for education and religion. He was also in favour of sanitary legislation, and

speaking of a bill for the promotion of the public health, he says, "We trust that it will fully comprehend, at whatever expense, all the provisions which might contribute to the success of so beneficent a measure—as drainage, and ventilation, and the minimum size of houses, and the proper width of streets and alleys; and withal the establishment of a medical police for the removal of nuisances." For such purposes he desired to employ the collective resources and compulsory power of the aggregate community.

But more than this. There was one large department of the relief of distress in which he not only admitted but frequently asserted the need of a public provision. He drew a clear distinction between the relief of affliction and the relief of indigence.

In the latter case "the will is upon the side of that indolence and dissipation which lead to poverty, so that poverty will be indefinitely multiplied with the public provision that is made for it." Hence it follows that "this walk can never be overtaken, but by every step of advancement upon it, it stretches forth into a more hopeless distance than before, and is also more crowded with the thriftless, and the beggarly, and the immoral." In fact "to think of providing for the wants of poverty by the ordination of an adequate supply is every way as irrational as

to aim at the extirpation of a fire by pouring oil upon it."

On the other hand, "A provision however conspicuous for the former will not add one instance of distress more to the already existing catalogue . . . . We shall never enlist the human will on the side of disease by all we can do for its relief. No man will break a limb for the benefit of a skilful amputation . . . In the very constitution of our sentient nature, in its repugnance to pain and physical suffering, we have the strongest possible guarantee against men wilfully becoming patients, in order to their admission into an asylum for disease." The amount of such distress is therefore definite, "so that this walk of charity can be overtaken, and without any corrupt influence on those who are sustained by it." On these grounds he urged that incurables, the deaf and dumb, the blind, the insane, and all cases which can be better treated in institutions than in private families, ought to be provided for with the utmost liberality from public funds.

For this opinion he found a warrant in the Bible. "The doings of our Saviour in the world, after he entered on his career as a minister, had in them much of the *éclat* of public charity. Had he put his miraculous power of feeding into full operation, it would have thrown the people loose from all regular habits, and spread riot and disorder over the face of

the land. But there was no such drawback to his miraculous power of healing. And we think it both marks the profoundness of his wisdom, and might serve to guide the institutions and the schemes of philanthropy, that while we read of but two occasions on which he multiplied loaves for a people who had been overtaken with hunger, and one on which he refused the miracle to a people who crowded about him for the purpose of being fed, he laid no limitation whatever on his supernatural faculties, when they followed him for the purpose of being cured. But it is recorded of him again and again, that when the halt, and the withered, and the blind, and the impotent, and those afflicted with divers diseases, were brought unto him, he looked to them, and he had compassion on them, and he healed them all."

How far Chalmers would have carried this argument is not quite clear. In the case of orphans, after some hestitation, he decides in favour of the voluntary system, being persuaded that "they fare better on the whole in virtue of being left to the sympathy of their more distant relatives, and afterwards to the spontaneous patronage which their situation procures for them in society." This, he adds, "is perhaps the most ambiguous of the cases that have been proposed; but, on the whole, I should feel inclined to decide against such an institution"; and he quotes an instance from Spitalfields where an

inquiry had shown that "there were more than seventy orphans who, upon the death of their parents, had been taken into their houses by the poor, and had been supported by them."

At one time he seemed to approve of the establishment of a public system of free medical relief, but this feeling was altered by a clearer perception of the evils which it involves. Of these we have since had abundant evidence. Free medical relief has been enormously extended under the Poor Law and by the voluntary hospitals, and has proved in numberless cases to be the first step in a career of pauperism; while the abuses in the form of mismanagement and the want of proper nursing and attention to the inmates of Poor Law infirmaries all over the country have shown that even indoor relief cannot safely be entrusted to official hands. Voluntary effort, inspection, and co-operation are everywhere needed to counteract the tendencies of the legal institution. At the same time, and in the very midst of all this relief, the power of self-help, in the form of insurance against illness, has been proved by a wonderful development of friendly societies and provident dispensaries, which might have gone far to solve the whole problem but for the most unfair competition to which they have been exposed.

It must be admitted that the line here adopted by Chalmers is at variance with the principle so clearly

laid down at the outset in the contrast which he drew between the provinces of justice and compassion. The care of the afflicted is surely a subject for compassion, and there seems to be no good reason why "institutional" relief, so far as it is really required, should not be administered by voluntary effort, except in the case of lunatics, who, from a regard for their fellows, may be fairly brought within the sphere of justice. Other passages may be found[1] in which Chalmers himself selects certain cases of affliction as among those best suited for charitable aid, and for the very reason for which he was prepared to consign them to the Poor Law. Nevertheless the distinction between the sort of relief which is sure to increase its objects, and that which has little or no such tendency, is a valid one, though the point of the distinction lies not in the question by whom the relief shall in either case be administered, but in the safety with which a certain and "ostentatious" provision may be made for the one and not for the other. Regarded in this light, the distinction has great practical importance; for, the one kind of relief being far less liable to abuse than the other, it is evident on which side of the stronghold of pauperism an attack may best be delivered. Let us first get rid of such a monstrous evil as Out-door Relief, and the next generation will be in a position to decide the fate of the Poor Law workhouse and infirmary.

[1] See below, ch. v.

Under present circumstances this seems to be the true line of progress. The advocates of a voluntary system have first to organise their forces and adapt them to the situation in which they have been placed. They can begin with the comparatively easy work of preventing the worthy and provident poor from having anything to do with the guardians; this can be done first by the cure of temporary distress, then by the more expensive and anxious treatment of the aged and infirm. Illness, whether temporary or chronic, can, with the help of the Friendly Societies, be gradually withdrawn from the province of the Poor Law. As methods improve, and charity becomes stronger by the training of her workers, it will be possible to deal effectually with cases which at first were left to the parish as impracticable; then, with the more difficult class which has been set aside as "undeserving"; and in time with the most complicated and perplexing problems of distress. The two essential conditions are training and co-operation. Wherever the forces of charity can be organised on the basis of thorough work, it is possible, not only to replace out-door relief by voluntary help, but also to rescue, one by one, a large number of persons who would otherwise become inmates of Poor Law institutions. By this individual method many may be restored to self-support, or provided for by the kindly ministrations of benevolence. We have not indeed the clear field

which Chalmers was able to secure for his work at St. John's; it will be hard for the English people "to emerge from an abyss in which they have been fastening and deepening for two hundred years." But let us not despair. The method if slow is sure. All turns on the thorough treatment of each case as it arises, and no Guardians will object to be relieved of their responsibility for the particular person or family whose circumstances are under consideration at the moment. Thus, by a gradual process, we may hope at last to render the whole system of state relief unnecessary.

In the meantime every effort must be made to prevent the grant of more powers to the Guardians by legislation, and to anticipate their use of such powers as they now possess. Space does not permit us to dwell upon the excessive abuses of the Poor Law in the time of Chalmers. Here and there we have quoted a few of the many pages which he devotes to them, not with the object of commenting on the follies of the past, but in order to derive lessons for the present and the future. It is well known that England was brought to the verge of ruin by the full development of this misguided legislation, and all men ought to realise that each new encroachment on the domain of charity is a step backwards in the direction of the old chaos. Even if we should halt where we now stand our system is as wrong as it

ever was in principle, and differs only in degree from that which preceded it. To some minds the following outburst of indignation will not appear too strong for the modified form of evil which is still by law established.

"We hold pauperism to be a still more deadly antagonist to the morality of our nation, though neither so sudden nor so ostensible in the mischief which it inflicts upon human principle; and, instead of striking out local and visible eruptions, in certain parts of the body politic, holding forth a cup of seeming bounty, but which is charged with a slow and insinuating poison, wherewith it has tainted the whole frame of society. It effecteth its work of destruction, upon the character of man, more by sap than by storm. The family virtues have not been swept away by it with the violence of an inundation; but they have drooped and languished, and, at the end of a few generations, are now ready to expire. The mildew which it has sprinkled over the face of the community, has fallen, in small and successive quantities, from its hand; and it is only by an addition made every year, to this deleterious blight, that the evil at length is consummated. Like the malaria in Italy, it has now attained a progress and a virulency which begin to be contemplated with the awe of some great approaching desolation; and a sense of helplessness mingles with the terror which is

inspired by the forebodings of a mighty disaster that has been gathering along the lapse of time, into more distinct shape and more appalling magnitude. It is, indeed, a frightful spectacle; and the heart of the Christian, as well as of the civil philanthropist, ought to be solemnised by it. He, of all men, should not look on with indifference, while the vapour of this teeming exhalation so thickens and spreads itself throughout the whole moral atmosphere of our land. And, when he witnesses the fell malignity of its operation, both on the graver and more amiable virtues of our nature—when he sees how diligence in the callings, and economy in the habits, of individuals, are alike extinguished by it, and both the tenderness of relationship, and the wider charities of life, are chilled and overborne—we should expect of this friend to the higher interests of our species, that he, among all his fellows, would be most intent on the destruction of a system that so nips the best promises of spiritual cultivation, and, under the balefulness of whose shadow, are now withering into rapid decay, and sure annihilation, the very fairest of the fruits of righteousness."

This passage was written in 1821, but it was re-published in 1839. Our author had no faith in the reforms of the Commissioners of 1834, whose policy has only been carried out in a few unions bearing an utterly insignificant proportion to the total number.

These examples have indeed shown that a strict administration is possible, but the fact that they are so exceptional proves with far greater force that it will never be universal. To set up a system on the wrong foundation and devise elaborate restraints to mitigate its evils—to place in the hands of popularly elected bodies an infinite power of mischief, and expect them to learn such wisdom as to control or abstain from the exercise of that power; this is, indeed, the most extraordinary style of legislation. And what is the natural result? The honest man of ordinary abilities, who is elected on a Board of Guardians must needs fall in with the rest, and do the business that is set before him without much consideration for the "non-desirability of placing the pauper in a better position than the independent labourer" or other notable maxims which are in direct opposition to the very nature of the law that he is called upon to administer. Under such an institution, whatever may be the best theories we shall get in practice only an average standard of routine, more or less harmful in proportion as it is checked by a further set of self-imposed regulations. Alike within the Board itself and on the larger field of discussion outside, it is inevitable that the few who have the leisure and ability to make a study of these very difficult questions, and the spirit to contend for a principle, should be overpowered by the numbers who

have only kind and vague ideas. Who can hope to convince the latter, when conviction is the fruit of study and experience? If Chalmers, with all his influence, could not prevail against the "headlong sensibilities" of his own generation, he is now indeed a voice crying in the wilderness. But the gospel of such voices may be true.

Here is a record of practical acquaintance with that strict administration from which some expect so much. It has a very close application to the subsequent history of the Poor Law.

"There has of late been a decided impulse felt in many parts of England towards a more strict administration of the law, founded both on the distress of the times and on the unexampled height to which the expense of pauperism had arisen." The reference is to the Select Vestry Act and to the appointment of a better class of overseers, and the writer thus proceeds. "The expedients which have been used either to reduce the claim of the applicant, or to repel him altogether, are exceedingly various; and certain it is that, under the energy of a far more active and watchful regimen than wont to be exercised, there has been a very marvellous reduction of expenditure. In some instances it has suddenly subsided to one-third of what it was before; and in far the greater number of cases that were investigated by us, the saving has been ascribed to the improved management

more than to any improvement which may have taken place in the circumstances of the people. It was most gratifying to learn that, even after the many dismissals and reductions of allowance which had taken place, the people were, to all sense, in as great comfort and sufficiency as before. This is a fact pregnant with inference."

The most natural inference is that the resources of the people had been underrated, and that if free play were given to them there would be no need of any Poor Law. Yet ingenuity can derive from the same fact an opposite conclusion. "But, it may be asked, if, under the operation of existing acts, the cost of pauperism really admits of so great an alleviation, might not the whole evil of it be reduced in the same proportion? And ought we not to be satisfied with this, rather than hazard a radical change of system throughout the land, and see what can be done with a good administration of the laws that we have, ere any further innovation shall be thought of"? In short, it is urged that "the evil does not lie in the system, but in the abuses of it"; and the reduction of expenditure by strict measures becomes "an argument that the system is in itself a very good one."

The reply to this is twofold. First, that in most cases the requisite degree of rigour will not be applied; and, in point of fact, the Select Vestry Act

was only adopted in one-seventh of the English parishes. "The truth is that, in the country, it is extremely difficult to find materials for the formation of an efficient vestry, and in this way the benefit of the Act has been very much confined to towns. Throughout the great majority of the land the business of English pauperism is moving on in its wonted order, and there is as strong a sense of its oppressiveness in the kingdom as at any former period."

The second observation is, that even where the requisite degree of rigour "has been resorted to, and with great immediate success, it will not be persevered in." This also was proved by experience. "It was at length found that the unnatural tension of a very strict and vigilant and, of course, unpopular management, could not always be sustained; and so, on the moment of consequent relaxation, the pauperism, in virtue of its own native elasticity, speedily resumed, nay, exceeded, the greatest amount which it had formerly arrived at." The causes for this reaction are evident on both sides. "The very success will lull the administration into its old apathy. . . . The very humanity as well as indolence of managers will gradually and insensibly lead them to admit of successive mitigations; and nature, at length tired out of that strenuousness which was assumed at the outset, will subside into her old inertness. This has been the history of many a philanthropic establishment,

and more especially of many a parish workhouse. They set out with amazing vigour and efficiency, but at length relapse into the tame and ordinary style that is averaged all over England." On the other hand, "it is in the very nature of pauperism that at all times there is the pressure of a tendency from without, which will instantly force admittance, so soon as there is the slightest relaxation from that vigilance wherewith its portals have been guarded."

What, moreover, is the justification for this harsh treatment of the pauper? "If the many thousand applicants for public charity in England do really have a right to the relief of their wants . . . why should they be scared away from the assertion of this right by any circumstances of hardship or degradation, or violence to the affections of nature, being associated therewith? . . . It is playing fast and loose with a people—first to make a declaration of their right, and then to plant obstacles in the way of their making it good. . . . The first great blunder in this legislation was to ordain a law of compulsory relief at all; and when, to save the ruinous consequences of this law, the relief was made as degrading as possible, this was attempting to correct one evil by another, or to bring about a right result by what mathematicians would call a compensation of errors." . . . It was an attempt to correct "a blunder in the essence of the

law by a blunder in the practical administration of it."

Thus the famous Workhouse Test, on which the whole policy of the Commissioners was based, appears to Chalmers a monstrous anomaly. "Their paupers are met by the same treatment with their criminals." They are sentenced to "perpetual imprisonment. . . . The Workhouse is often employed as a scarecrow by which to distance or deter applications. . . . Does not the very necessity of thus assimilating an eleemosynary house to a Bridewell, prove that there is a fundamental error in the whole system? Would it not be better if, instead of first giving a wrong impulse and then devising a force of resistance by which to neutralise it, both the one and the other were dispensed with?"

The grievance is not merely theoretical. "We cannot imagine a state of things more injurious to the virtue and peace of the commonwealth. Even though the discipline of a workhouse should at length be perfectly assimilated to the discipline of a gaol, we fear that like many other of the legal scarecrows which have been devised, its only re-action would be in working down the taste and character of the people to its own standard. In proportion as the law multiplied its severities, would pauperism acquire a stouter stomach for the digestion of them—and those regulations which at first might deter, will, at length, be

got over, because of a now fiercer, and hardier, and more resolute population. We have at all times, exceedingly doubted the policy of those expedients which are meant to operate *in terrorem*—and have ever thought of them as most fearfully hazardous experiments on the principle and feeling of the lower orders. They may repel some of those who are of a better and finer temperament than their neighbours; but, in by far the greater number of instances, will they blunt the delicacies which are thus handled so rudely; and the very instrument which they thought to lay hold of for driving applicants away, will vanish before their grasp. After a temporary subsidence of pauperism from this cause, there will be a reflux of it in its old force and abundance; and worse than the heavy expenditure which it brings back, shall we behold throughout the country a deteriorated *morale*, the hard-favoured aspect of a more sullen and impracticable population."

This in truth has been the consequence. We owe to the Poor Law that worst of evils, the creation of a pauper class. Those who know what its members are like, will recognise them in the following description. "The practical effect of the whole has been to form two distinct classes or characters of population, which stand more widely and remotely contrasted in England, than they do, we believe, in any other country of Europe. The

one is a pure, and a noble, and a high-minded class, who, of course, would be revolted by the severities of pauperism. The other yield to her temptations, and by weathering the brunt of her severities, their meanness and corruption have only been rendered more inveterate. The spirit of education and of moral enterprise that is now abroad in England, must extend the one class. But while the law of pauperism continues, the other class too must increase and multiply. They are the in-field gypsies of the land; and they transmit their habit to their descendants; and this is the reason why pauperism is so apt to fix, as if by hereditary settlement, in families. There is thus a mass of corruption, that never will be got rid of but with the extinction of this boasted charity by law. Until a blow be given to the root of the mischief, it will be found, in the long run, that there is a noxiousness in its antidotes, as well as in its bane. Its severities, in fact, are alike hurtful with its temptations. It is not by playing the one against the other, that any substantial or abiding reformation will be gained. There must be a way devised in which to cancel both."

The only use that he can imagine for a Workhouse is as a place of "confinement and isolation for those worthless self-created and immoral poor, who were so patronised and multiplied under the old system . . . as a receptacle for those whose offences are

not cognoscible nor punishable by law, yet whose habits render them at once a burden and a nuisance to society." Even for this the Workhouse could have no more than a temporary value. Under a better economy, like that of Scotland, there was no room for such an institution. "All we require for our people is an adequate ecclesiastical with an adequate educational system. Having this, we shall stand in no need of those pauper bastiles, or any half-way houses whatever between our churches and schools on the one hand and our bridewells or places of correction on the other. With a sufficiently thick-set parochial apparatus, whether in town or country, all our deserving poor will be carefully provided for; and the undeserving more effectually shamed out of their habits by the remonstrances of church office-bearers, and the natural indignation of neighbours in their respective localities, than by all the terrors and penalties which the most rigorous of Poor Law Commissioners can devise."

A short space must here be devoted to the plan suggested by Chalmers for the abolition of the Poor Law. He was altogether opposed to violent reforms. The attempt to introduce any sudden and comprehensive change would excite "a disturbing force," a "conflict of sentiment" in every parish. "It were the method for bringing into play the elements of a mighty agitation; and spreading out the question on

an arena wide enough, and conspicuous enough, for the great master demagogues of the land. Those writers who live upon the discontents of the people, would instantly seize upon it as the fittest topic for keeping up that fermentation, in the whirl and briskness of which all their prosperity lies. And so it is, that an attempt on the poor laws, is dreaded by many as the sure precursor of a revolution—nor is it seen what the possible way is, by which this question can be prosecuted with the same wisdom, and withal in the same calmness, and with the same happy results, as have oft been experienced in the treatment of other questions, and that through a long era of peaceful and progressive improvement in the domestic policy of England."

Besides this, it would be necessary to convince sympathetic people that they could be set free from the burden of the poor-rate and yet, "that the poor are not to suffer by it. . . . The benevolence of Englishmen must be satisfied. . . . This surely is not a feeling which ought to be rudely handled; and therefore it is that throughout the whole business of reform, there should not merely be the utmost tenderness to the lower orders, but the utmost tenderness to the humanity of those who feel for them."

The plan proposed was very simple. "We would take on no new cases." As for the old ones, "they

must be seen out—and in as great sufficiency too as they were led to expect under the present arrangement." The pauperism already in existence was to be "suffered to melt away by the operation of death," while "they who would eventually have constituted the next generation of paupers," were "better served and better satisfied under another treatment." He would attack the Poor Law, not by immediate abolition, but by a gradual process. He calls it a "retracing process"; a "bit by bit replacement" of the charity of law by the charity of goodwill and discretion. He repeats a number of such phrases as "progressive improvement—to break down the mass into fragments—to do the business piecemeal—and that each should assist in working off this nuisance from his own little neighbourhood, and thus contribute his own quota to the deliverance of the Empire." The Poor Law student who told him "that it might be easy to effect the deliverance of one parish, but that it was not so easy to legislate for the deliverance of all England," simply gave away his case. "If an easy and applicable method can be devised for the parish, what is it that the legislature has properly to do? Simply to remove the legal obstructions that may now stand in the way of the method in question; simply to authorise each parish that so wills, to avail itself thereof."

The method which he recommends is that of permissive legislation, which had already proved successful for the enclosure of commons and for the minor alterations introduced from time to time in the Poor Law. Only, instead of enacting minor improvements and applying them everywhere, he would adopt the right principle at once, and make its application gradual throughout the country. Each parish should be at liberty to attempt the substitution of the voluntary for the rate-supported system. He would require the previous consent of a large proportion of the householders, which would ensure that the experiment should be made where it was most likely to succeed. Under these circumstances, it might be expected that a few small country places would wish to try the change,—the smaller the better, because the more manageable. These he calls "trial parishes." Their example might be followed by "imitation parishes." The results would be examined and reported on, and so "experiment would pass into experience."

Treated in this manner, the "ponderous establishment" would gradually melt away. The old paupers would disappear by lapse of time, being left in possession of their allowances, if it were found that they really needed them. As for new applications, they would soon become rare if met by thorough investigation. "The only strenuous management that is at all required will be at the outset, where each case

ought to be fearlessly met and sifted to the uttermost; and every right expedient be thought of and tried, that if possible it may be shifted aside from the parochial fund, and devolved in a better way on the thrift and labour of the applicant himself, on the duty of his relatives, or on the charities of private benevolence." It will be found that "in proportion to the labour bestowed on each case will be the smallness of the number of them. . . . This style of administration acts by a preventive influence upon the people. Its genuine effect is to keep each man in his own place, and many whom the old system would have seduced to the door of the parish vestry will 'study to be quiet, and to do their own business, and to work with their own hands rather than be burdensome.' . . . That fermentation of hopes, and appetites, and busy expedients which might be witnessed now in every parish in England, where so many families have been thrown agog by the very existence of a legal provision, will speedily subside." We have only to remove the cause of the disturbance, and allow free play to the forces of nature. For the truth is that we have been victims of a gross delusion. There are "a thousand fears and difficulties in pauperism" which have been created by the imagination. Pauperism, after all, is nothing but "a bugbear, which shrinks and vanishes almost into nothing before the touch of a stricter inquiry and

a closer personal intercourse with the families." It may look formidable in the distance, but "the nearer you come to it, it dwindles the more into insignificance before you . . . and may be followed back again into the nonentity from which it never would have sprung had it not been conjured up by the wand of legislation."

Before concluding this chapter it is right to notice the objection that charitable relief does not differ essentially from relief that is drawn from the rates; and unless it be controlled with the utmost skill, is likely to do equal harm. This Chalmers fully recognised; he did not believe in the virtue of any outside assistance in comparison with what the poor could do for themselves. But there must be some assistance from without, and according to the source from which it is derived will be the danger of abuse. Self-help will injure no man. The help of neighbours or relations may pauperise a man, but it is guarded by full knowledge of his circumstances and character, and "limited by the operation of delicacies which prevent the mutual dependence from being carried too far." The employer or acquaintance is one step further removed from the object of his kindness. The benevolent stranger knows much less about him, and has less right to interfere; he will do great mischief if he gives without care and discretion; his first step must be to become in some real sense a friend. Far

more dangerous is the public fund of any kind, to which all have access, and upon which they feel that they can reckon. Worst of all when such a fund is permanent, official, and legalised. Throughout this series we find that relief is the less injurious in proportion as it is drawn from the nearest and most private sources, and checked by the most natural and self-acting safeguards. Of the large amount given away in Paris, where they had no Poor Law, Chalmers says "that the sure effect of such distributions is to augment the discomfort and moral deterioration of the lower classes"; and even the church system of relief in Scotland was only recommended as "less hurtful," and as a temporary expedient. Voluntary benevolence is better than a poor-rate, because "there is no such system or certainty in its operations as would lead to the same general dependence that is now felt in England on the allowances of a legal charity. Individual charity can withdraw itself at pleasure, and will naturally decline the protection and encouragement of the worthless. But worthlessness, and that too of the grossest description, can compel, in its own behalf, the dispensations of the legal charity, and cast upon it the burden of all its own extravagance and folly. We have no such consequence to fear from the fortuitous and free gratuities of the philanthropist as from the regulated ministrations of the parish vestry, which are conducted

irrespective of character, and require no other qualification than the actual indigence of the applicant. In the concerns of private benevolence there is a delicacy felt on the one side, and a discrimination exercised upon the other, which, confined withal to incidental cases, form effectual guarantees against any general relaxation of moral or providential habits, as the fruit of its liberalities. But the benevolence of law holds out a wholesale bounty and temptation to improvidence."

Such being the opinions of Chalmers on the Poor Law and the necessity for its abolition, he did not expect to see them soon prevail. "We are not very sanguine of an immediate reception for our views, and conceive it far more probable that men will seek for relief from the evils of pauperism in a succession of palliatives and trifling modifications, than go back to the first elements of the question, or seek to eradicate the principle on which the system of a legal and compulsory provision is founded. It would not surprise us if, by a series of failures, in shifting from one expedient to another, and after that experience had demonstrated they were but shifting from one error to another—we should not wonder if, as by the indirect process in mathematics, states and parishes, by a practical *reductio ad absurdum* were brought to the truth at last. We look on the last great attempt for the reform of English pauperism as but one step

in this process—even as the Acts of Mr. Gilbert, Sturges Bourne, and others have been successively thrown aside as things tried and found wanting. Let us hope that this tentative process will not be lengthened out indefinitely."

CHAPTER III.

CHURCH AND SCHOOL.

"We had better seek for a system which will develop honest men, than for one which will deal cunningly with vagabonds." —*Ruskin.*

NOTHING was more clear to the mind of Chalmers than the great truth that welfare depends on character; nor can we form a just estimate of his work from any other point of view than that of an earnest and devoted Christian. The depth of his religious convictions, and of his trust in a divine guidance for every word and act, can only be understood from the letters and diaries which disclose his inmost thoughts and aspirations. To dwell on this subject would be foreign to our purpose, but it must be mentioned as furnishing the key to his whole doctrine of charity, and to the manner in which he worked it out. He did not underrate the power of circumstances or the value of good machinery, but he was absolutely convinced that moral influence alone could regenerate the world. The very title of his chief

work on the problems of society is significant; it is the "*Christian* and Economic Polity of a Nation."

We therefore begin this chapter with what he calls the "Scriptural view of the question." He is fond of quoting the doctrine and example of St. Paul from Acts xviii. and xx., 2 Thess. iii., and 1 Tim. v., to show that, "while in those days the largest sacrifices were made by Christian men for the relief of the poor, the chief anxiety of their inspired teacher was to provide against the risk of their moral deterioration. He knew them to be alike capable of moral greatness with those who, in the scale of rank or wealth, were immeasurably above them; and we cannot figure a nobler exhibition than that of Paul—when, for the avowed purpose of building up a virtuous heroism of character amongst the poor, he became a workman himself; and that, in order to show to others of the same class, not only how to exempt themselves from the necessity of being receivers, but how, by the labour of their own hands, to support the weak and the indigent around them. But with all this devotion to their truest interests, his sympathies and feelings had none of that sickly hue, which tinges the effusions, as well as sits on the visages of our modern sentimentalists. If a man would not work, he could leave him to the inflictions of nature and necessity; and with a just confidence in the wisdom of nature's own discipline, thought it better not to interfere with those

correctives and chastisements of hers, whereby she schools, and by means so severe as the agonies of hunger and the felt urgencies of self-preservation, the otherwise wholly reckless votaries of dissipation and indolence. It is obvious, that, in the mind of our great Apostle, character was all in all."

Thus "it is clear that the direct, or what may be called the preceptive, influence of this religion is all on the side of a most strenuous habit and principle of independence. . . . But a vast deal more in the way of influence is to be attributed to the indirect operation of Christianity on the general tone of feeling and of character. A man in cultivated life would recoil from an act of falsehood, not because he has been rebuked out of this vice by the lessons of an authoritative code, but because his whole habit, formed as it insensibly is by the circumstances which surround him, carries along with it an utter contempt and disinclination for so odious a transgression upon all right and honourable principle. And thus it is with Christianity in reference to pauperism. Out of its code there may be gathered materials for rearing a direct barrier against the progress of this malady among the people. But the main agency of this system of instruction lies in the general refinement and elevation which it imparts to the character of those who are the subjects of it."

The relation between cause and effect is illustrated

in a homely way by the reply of Chalmers to a kind-hearted opponent :—" Of these two things, the comfort and character of the people, he would begin with the wrong term first. . . . He seeks the restoration of character through the medium of comfort as the preliminary. . . . He tells us that 'a working-man who puts on a good coat on Sunday has mounted one step on the ladder of improvement. The next may take him to church.' He mistakes the order here. It is not the coat, furnished perhaps by a clothing society, which gives the impulse to church-going. It is the conscience operated on by a moral agency, and so enlisted on the side of church-going, which leads him to find the coat. . . . The experimental order will be found at one with the scriptural order. Seek first, in behalf of these people, the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all other things shall be added unto them."

He further points out that the force of example operates more extensively than either the direct or indirect action of religious teaching. Hence it is that " Christianity may elevate the general standard of morals among a people even though a very small portion of them shall, in the whole sense and significancy of the term, become Christians. . . . The secondary influence of Christianity goes a great way further than its primary or direct influence. For every individual whom it converts, it may, by its reflex

operation, civilise a hundred." This effect is produced by the habit of imitation which prevails in the lower as well as the higher ranks of society. "There is a style of manner and appearance that is admired among the poor, and which, when introduced by one of the families, constitutes it the leader of a fashion that is apt to be emulated by all the others. There is a certain *bon ton* by which the average feeling of every district is represented; and nothing contributes more powerfully to raise it than the residence of an individual whose attention to the duties of his station has kept him nobly and manfully afloat above the degradations of charity. The infection of such an example spreads among the neighbours. What he shuns from principle they spurn at from pride; and thus the very envies and jealousies of the human heart" are enlisted on the side of independence and respectability.

Moreover, it is evident that Christianity promotes charitable feeling and action among the rich, while it also "quickens the play and adds to the productiveness" of all those fountains of mutual aid which exist among the poor. This is another way in which it brings a powerful influence to bear upon the people for their advancement.

It was therefore a religious and not a merely secular training which Chalmers aimed at promoting He found it already at work in his own country, and

the contemplation of its effects led him to draw a distinction between "the education of letters and the education of principle—the former of itself being comparatively of slight operation, and so far as it goes only tending somewhat to civilise; while the latter is of mighty and pervading effect over the whole man, whom it tends to Christianise, and to furnish with new habits, the result of that higher wisdom and principle, which are only to be learnt at the schools of an enlightened faith. It is this latter element which predominates, and gives its own characteristic and complexional variety to the state of Scotland—whose people have not been so powerfully operated upon by the same merely civilising influences of luxury and commerce as those of England; but who have had a larger share of the Christianising influence than either of the neighbouring nations—so as, in some respects, to have reached a higher standard than that of England, and, in all respects, than that of Ireland, whose people are behind in both."

To understand the action of a machine, we must appreciate the nature of the motive force. "There is a charm ascribed to the scholastic system of Scotland; and the sanguine imagination is, that by importing its machinery into England and Ireland it will work the same marvellous transformation there on the character of their people that was experienced among ourselves. But it is forgotten that a warm and earnest Chris-

tianity was the animating spirit of all our peculiar institutions for generations after they were framed; and that, wanting this, they can no more perform the function of moralising the people than skeletons can perform the functions or put forth the faculties of living men."

While, however, the animating spirit is essential, it is not the less important to provide the best possible system for its operation. "The falling of rain from the clouds no more supersedes the preparation of receptacles for gathering, and of channels for conveying it, than the descent of living water, as the aliment of all that is acceptable in human virtue and spiritual in human discernment, supersedes the question of the best and fittest construction of an external system, for the circulation of it through a neighbourhood. The Apostle, who felt most his dependence on the Spirit for the conversion of the souls of men, laboured most in the rearing of an outward and visible agency for the furtherance of the cause." It was also clear to Chalmers that in the framework of the ideal system two conditions would be fulfilled. It would thoroughly "pervade" each separate community, and it would embrace the whole area of the country. How far were these conditions secured under the system which he had inherited? To answer this question we must consider its origin and development.

The devotion of the Scottish people to the cause of education is a matter of history. That they have long occupied a foremost place among the nations in this respect is a fact well known to every student of the subject. The following short summary of events is taken from an interesting chapter by Sir Henry Craik.[1] Writing in 1896, he observes that "National education in England is only twenty-six years old; it is nearly two centuries old in Scotland, and even before the statute of 1696 established a school in every Scottish parish, the education of the people had been the subject of decrees, both in Council, in Parliament, and in the Assembly of the Church." Secular as well as religious schools existed in the Middle Ages, and as early as the reign of James IV. we find a statute in 1494 requiring the principal freeholders to provide their heirs with "perfect Latin." The question of education was taken up with energy by the leaders of the Reformation who prepared a scheme in 1560 for providing schools throughout the country; and a decree of the Privy Council for local assessment in 1616 was confirmed by Parliament in 1633. A period of strife and persecution followed, but in 1696 the "charter of Scottish education" was carried, and "associated the Revolution Settlement and the Presbyterian Church with that which became the most powerful agent in

[1] *The State in Relation to Education*, ch. viii., § 5.

advancing the prosperity of the country." By this Act the heritors of each parish were required to provide a schoolhouse and a teacher's salary. The enforcement of this regulation, and the superintendence of the school, were placed in the hands of the local presbytery. The system was established throughout the Lowlands, though nearly a century elapsed before it also gained possession of the Highlands. A later Act in 1803 increased the salary of the teacher, and provided him with a freehold house and garden. The school, with the master's house and garden, were seen in every village along with the church and the manse and glebe of the minister. "The parish school was, in short, an adjunct of the Parish Church." The Commission of Brougham, in 1818, disclosed a state of mental destitution in the Highlands which the Church worked hard to remedy. State inspection and grants were introduced in 1839. The Disruption of 1843 caused a division of the responsibility between the Established Church and the Free Church, and the Act of 1861 transferred a portion of it to the Universities. It was not till 1872 that the Legislature remodelled the whole system, completing it by the addition of "those new principles of general local assessment, popular local representation, and universal compulsion, for which the nation was then fully prepared."

Throughout this sketch we notice the intimate

connection between religion and education which prevailed in Scotland. So closely were they bound together that it is impossible to treat the one subject apart from the other. It is also evident that the value of this connection would depend on the character of the religious element, which again might vary at different times and places. We must therefore take some account of the history of Church as well as School throughout this period.

The French Calvinism of Geneva was introduced into Scotland by John Knox, and the First Covenant was signed in 1557 as a protest against the attempt of Queen Mary to restore the Roman Catholic religion. But it was not till five years after her execution that the Presbyterian system was finally established by Andrew Melville in 1592. There is some difficulty in striking a balance between its merits and defects. On the one hand we are told that by means of the Church assemblies the people acquired for the first time a voice in the administration of affairs. Green observes in his *Short History* that "no Church constitution has proved in practice so democratic as that of Scotland. Its influence in raising the nation at large to a consciousness of its own power is shown by the change which passes, from the moment of its final establishment, over the face of Scotch history. The country ceases to belong to the great nobles, who had turned it into their battle-ground ever since the

death of Bruce." Such is the political aspect of the change. But on the other hand, if we take a more local view and consider the effect on the character of the people who became members of the new church, a very different impression may be formed. We know that its short-lived ascendancy in England drew from Milton the indignant exclamation that "New Presbyter is but Old Priest writ large." The exercise of an absolute authority over the minds and consciences of others is indeed a perilous responsibility for even the best and wisest of mankind; and there is abundant evidence to show that a perfect tyranny of gloomy superstition was established at that time, which fettered all free thought and intellectual development.[1] Education, directed by such a spirit, could be little else than a system of drill, or a process for the compression of human nature within the confines of a dark and narrow mould. Perhaps to some extent the picture has been overdrawn. Perhaps the Presbyterian system, even at its worst, might serve to exercise the mental powers in some degree, while it would also train the disciple in self-control and orderly behaviour. We must remember the circumstances under which this Church grew up. The Stuart rule in Scotland was one of violence, when the barbarism of the middle ages was yielding to civilisation, not by the paths of peaceful improvement

[1] See Buckle's *History of Civilisation.*

but in the heat of a desperate conflict with a government which sought to trample on the liberties and convictions of the people. Those evil days have long gone by, and the possible abuse of a system is not a valid argument against its use. Yet past events will leave their mark upon the future. Persecution is never the mother of a moderate and reasonable faith, and in the Scottish Church it fixed a leaven of intolerance which must have gone far to neutralise the virtue of her sobriety and discipline, and to prevent her growth on the side of free knowledge and enlightened sympathy. At the time of which we speak the sterner qualities were most required. A short narrative from Chalmers will show how the Church was able to bring order out of chaos.

"In the middle of the 17th century there was a very efficient system of Christian instruction in the parishes of Scotland, and it is understood that the country at that time was in a very healthful moral condition. Immediately after the Restoration the Act for the establishment of parochial schools was repealed, and there was an attempt to enforce episcopacy upon the Scottish population, which gave rise to what may be termed religious wars, that lasted for nearly thirty years. From the disorder and turbulence of that period, along with the suspension of parochial education, the population seems to have deteriorated very rapidly. There is a most

frightful picture given of the state of Scotland in 1698 by Fletcher of Saltoun."—An extract follows in which that writer describes how the country was overrun by 200,000 vagrants, who lived by begging and plunder. They were outside the pale of church or law. Vice, drunkenness and murder were rife among them. "In years of plenty many thousands of them meet together in the mountains, where they feast and riot for many days; and at country weddings, markets, burials, and other the like public occasions, they are to be seen, both men and women, perpetually drunk, cursing, blaspheming, and fighting together."

In the midst of this confusion the Revolution Settlement was introduced, and under its protection the national prosperity revived. "It appears, from very distinct historical documents, that that state of things subsided almost *per saltum*, very suddenly indeed, when the population had leave to repose from the religious persecutions, and the parochial system of education was again general. They were besides plied from Sabbath to Sabbath by an efficient and acceptable clergy, in consequence of which the transformation appears to have been quite marvellous." He gives a second extract from Defoe, dated 1717, only nineteen years later than the "frightful" account of Fletcher, and the contrast between the two passages is very striking. The army of beggars has vanished; the law has resumed its sway; and the

people have become so orderly that a blind man would know when he had crossed the English border, by the different sounds that would reach his ears in the first town which he entered.

The latter half of the eighteenth century was marked by a great increase in the sum of knowledge and an extension of the area of thought. It was the period when "Scotland within her own narrow limits exhibited, in epitome, the great movement which took place in Europe between the middle and the modern ages. In a single generation, she may be said to have run the history of two centuries. The sudden start taken by her population, when the capabilities of her soil began to be unlocked after the rebellion of 1745, the almost impetuous career of her agriculture," were accompanied by "the awakening of the people from sloth to labour," which was apparent in an immense development of trade and manufactures. If the old despotism of authority was shaken by this upheaval, the Church, nevertheless, retained much of her former power and continued to promote the education of the people. If, no longer compelled to fight for her existence, she gradually sank into the lethargy of "Moderatism," it only needed the impulse of a more energetic spirit to waken the dry bones to active life. This was the work of Chalmers and the Evangelical party of which he was the foremost champion. He found the old

alliance and the old system established everywhere. The centre of each parish was the church with its attached school, or preparatory church, to form the minds of the future members of the congregation. Together the twin agencies were able to direct the whole course of human life from the cradle to the grave.

When we consider the significance of this fact in its bearing upon the history of a nation, we are not surprised to find in Scotland a peculiar type of character, most interesting for its combination of the diverse attributes of wisdom and simplicity, of energy and contentment, of sturdy self-reliance and humble piety. It has won our respect or admiration in the pages of Scott and Burns and a long list of writers down to Maclaren with his village heroes of Drumtochty. It is seen in the lives of self-made men like the brothers Chambers, Hugh Miller, Robert Dick, and others who have won their way to intellectual rank against all the obstacles of want. It has been the glory of many a poor student, toiling for the wages of a labourer that he might spend them on the learning of the University.

> "What though on hamely fare we dine,
> Wear hoddeu-grey, and a' that;
> Gie fools their silks and knaves their wine,
> A man's a man for a' that."

And in contempt of fame and luxury these men have shown us that

> "The pith o' sense and pride o' worth
> Are higher rank than a' that."

It has been truly remarked that the existence of this spirit of hardy self-reliance must render the problems of distress more easy of solution in Scotland than elsewhere. But it is also true, as Chalmers held, that the very formation of the Scottish character was due to a process of education. What has been done for one people may be done by like methods for another. No doubt there are races in the human family more or less marked by sterling qualities, or adapted for their cultivation. Yet we find the same habits prevalent amongst men of very different types, and often where they might have been least expected. Thus, the French peasant has become noted for the exercise of a frugality and self-restraint altogether alien to the temper of the gay Parisian; and the People's Banks have given birth, even in Italy, to a form of self-help, based on mutual confidence, which is still a novelty to the English Co-operator. In the face of such examples who can doubt the truth expressed by Horace as to the power of training on the lives of men?

Doctrina sed vim promovet insitam,
Rectique cultus pectora roborant;
Utcunque defecere mores,
Indecorant bene nata culpæ.

[Training draws forth the power within;
Wise discipline makes courage bold;
Should principle relax her hold,
E'en high-born hearts are soiled with sin.]

Both for the advancement of education and religion Chalmers was a firm believer in Establishment; and it was a cruel irony of fate which caused him, at the very end of his career, to stand forth among the founders of a new Free Church, in opposition to the principle which he never ceased to advocate. The basis of his opinion appears in the following argument. "There is a wide and a mighty difference between the wants of our physical and those of our moral and spiritual nature. In proportion to our want of food is our desire for food; but it is not so with our want of knowledge, or virtue, or religion. . . . The sensation of hunger is a sufficient guarantee for there being as many bakers in a country as it is good and necessary for the country to have, without any national establishment of bakers. This order of men will come forth, in number enough, at the mere bidding of the people; and it never can be for want of them that society will languish under the want of aliment for the human body. . . . But the case is widely different when the appetite for any good is short of the degree in which that good is useful or necessary; and, above all, when, just in proportion to our want of it, is the decay of our appetite towards it. . . . This we hold to be the chief ground upon which to plead for the advantage of a religious establishment. With it a church is built, and a teacher is provided, in every little district of the land. Without it . . . there

would be dreary unprovided blanks where no regular supply of instruction was to be had, and where there was no desire after it on the part of an untaught and neglected population."

There is nothing in this view at variance with the hearty sympathy which he always felt for Nonconformity and private enterprise. "My idea of the perfection of an ecclesiastical system lies in this, that in the first instance there should be an establishment, but that establishment constantly operated upon, stimulated and kept on the alert by the zeal and activity of an energetic, active, and unconstrained dissenterism. And I have a parallel idea to this in reference to a scholastic system, that there should be an apparatus of stationary schools, but . . . there should be full and free encouragement given to the talents and the energy and the competition of private adventurers."

While, however, his opinion was decided as to the need of State support, he was in favour of a strict limitation to its province, in order to leave room for personal effort; and the educational system which he approved was neither a State nor a Voluntary system, but one that should combine the benefits of both. Where the exact line of demarcation should be drawn between the rival spheres is a problem hard to solve. It may be that Chalmers expected too little from the State; it can hardly be doubted that his successors

have expected too much. He puts the matter in this way. "There appear to be three different species of education for the poor of a country: the endowed system, in which the whole expense of the school is maintained by the public; the unendowed system, in which everything is left to private effort, without any aid or direction; and the combined system between those two."

The first plan is rejected as unsatisfactory on the ground that "what is gotten for no value, is rated at no value. . . . The only way of thoroughly incorporating the education of the young with the habit of families, is to make it form part of the family expenditure, and thus to make the interest, and the watchfulness, and the jealousy of parents, so many guarantees for the diligence of their children. And, for these reasons, do we hold the establishment of free schools in a country to be a frail and impolitic expedient for the object of either upholding a high tone of scholarship among our labouring classes, or of rendering the habit at all general, or of perpetuating that habit from generation to generation." Our rulers have departed from the lines here laid down, and nowhere has the gift of free education been more heartily accepted than in Scotland. But the argument of Chalmers retains its force. The question of comparative loss or gain is still open to debate; and our wisest counsellors would be ready to admit

that the sacrifice of his principle can only be defended on account of the practical difficulties of its application.

The purely voluntary system is likewise condemned, for the reasons that have been already stated. Its resources are inadequate, and it will fail to cover the whole area. "A system wholly unendowed will never originate education in a country: it does not call out the people sufficiently."

The third arrangement, which he recommends, "may be called the medium system of education. It is about two centuries and a half ago since it had its origin in Scotland. The first advance was made, not by the people at large, but by the founders of this system. . . . They built schools and schoolhouses, and held them conspicuously forth to the view of the population, and they furnished such a salary to the teacher as enabled him, not to deal out a free education among the surrounding families, but to deal it out to them upon certain regular and moderate allowances. In this way they escaped the evils which we have just now ascribed to the gratuitous system of education. The people were not fully met. But they were met half-way. . . . The result has nobly accredited the wisdom of our parochial institutions. The common people of England and Ireland, left to demand education for themselves, never demanded it; nor would they, if left to the impulse of their own desire, ever have emerged

from the deep and stationary and unalleviated ignorance of the middle ages."

On the other hand, the "universality of the habit of education in our Lowland parishes is certainly a very striking fact; nor do we think that the mere lowness of the price forms the whole explanation of it. There is more than may appear at first sight in the very circumstance of a marked and separate edifice standing visibly out to the eye of the people, with its familiar and oft-repeated designation. There is also much in the constant residence of a teacher, moving through the people of his locality, and of recognised office and distinction among them. And perhaps there is most of all in the tie which binds the locality itself to the parochial seminary that has long stood as the place of repair for the successive young belonging to the parish, for it is thus that one family borrows its practice from another—and the example spreads from house to house, till it embrace the whole of the assigned neighbourhood—and the act of sending their children to the school passes at length into one of the tacit, but well-understood, proprieties of the vicinage, and new families just fall, as if by the infection, into the habit of the old ones, so as, in fact, to give a kind of firm, mechanical certainty to the operation of a habit, from which it were violence and singularity to depart, and in virtue of which education has

acquired a universality in Scotland which is unknown in the other countries of the world."

Chalmers held that this system was no less applicable to the growing populations of large towns than to country villages. In his own city parishes he insisted on a certain payment by the parents while at the same time he urged the rich to exercise their generosity in building schools and raising a fund for the support of teachers. Here was a form of charity to which a man might contribute freely, because "it carries not one single element of corruption along with it. It helps the poor without degrading them." He might contribute openly. "The more visible the apparatus is for the relief of poverty, the more is it fitted to defeat its own object . . . not so, however, with an offering rendered to the cause of education, let it be as public or as palpable as it may." There was a solid satisfaction in this work. "He could walk abroad over some suburb waste, and chalk out for himself the limits of his adventure; and amid the gaze and inquiry of the natives, could cause the public edifice gradually to arise in exhibition before them. . . . By such a movement as this might an individual, throughout a district, and a few individuals throughout the city at large, reclaim the whole of our present generation to a kindliness for the upper classes that is now unfelt; and this too, not by the ministration of those beggarly elements which serve to

degrade and impoverish the more; but by the ministration of such a moral influence among the young, as would serve to exalt humble life, and prepare for a better economy than our present, the habits of the rising generation."

In one of his essays Chalmers quotes several pages from a well-informed contemporary writer, which furnish a striking proof of the value of education and the danger of neglecting it. Two pictures are presented from the recent history of Paisley, which contained a working-class population engaged in the single industry of weaving. The first is a picture of prosperity.

"From about 1770 to 1800 the manufactures of silk gauzes and fine lawns flourished in Paisley; as also, during a portion of this period alluded to, that of figured-loom and hand-tamboured muslin. These branches afforded to all classes excellent wages; and being articles of fancy, room was afforded for a display of taste as well as enterprise and intelligence, for which the Paisley weavers were justly conspicuous. Sobriety and frugality being their general character, good wages enabled almost every weaver to possess himself of a small capital; which, joined with their general intelligence and industry, enabled and induced many to spend days, and even weeks together, in plodding over a new design—assisted frequently by their obliging neighbours, knowing that the first

half-dozen weavers who succeeded in some new style of work were sure to be recompensed ten-fold.

"Nearly one-half of Paisley at that period was built by weavers, from savings off their ordinary wages. Every house had its garden; and every weaver, being his own master, could work it when he pleased. Many were excellent florists; many possessed a tolerable library, and *all* were politicians; so that, about the period of the French Revolution, Mr. Pitt expressed more fear of the unrestricted political discussions of the Paisley weavers than of 10,000 armed men. Had Paisley been then what Paisley is now, crowded with half-informed Radicals and infidels, his fears would have been justified; but truth and honest dealing could fear nothing from a community constituted as Paisley then was; and never, perhaps, in the history of the world was there a more convincing proof of the folly of being afraid of a universal and thorough education, especially when impregnated with the religion of the Bible, than in the state of Paisley at that period."

We pass on to the cause of a melancholy decline in manners, habits, and morals. "The introduction of the manufactory of imitation Indian shawls about the year 1800 required that each weaver should employ one, two, or three boys called draw-boys. Eleven to twelve was the usual age, previous to this period, for sending boys to the loom; but as boys of any age

above five were equal to this work of drawing, those of ten were first employed, then, as the demand increased, those of nine, eight, seven, six, and even five. Girls, too, were by-and-bye introduced into the same employment, and at equally tender years. Many a struggle the honest and intelligent weaver must have had between his duty to his children and his immediate interests. The idea of his children growing up without schooling must have cost him many a pang; but the idea of losing 2s. 6d. or 3s. per week, and paying school wages beside, proved too great a bribe even for parental affection, and, as might have been expected, mammon in the end prevailed, and the practice gradually became too common and familiar to excite more than a passing regret. Children grew up without either the education or the training which the youth of the country derive from the schoolmaster; and every year since 1805 has sent forth its hundreds of unschooled and untamed boys and girls, now become the parents of a still ruder, more undisciplined, and ignorant offspring. Nor was this all. So great was the demand for draw-boys that ever and anon the town-crier went through the streets, offering not simply 2s. 6d., 3s., or 3s. 6d. a week for the labour of boys and girls, but bed, board, and washing, and a penny to themselves on Saturday night. This was a reward on disobedience to parents; family insubordination, with all its train of evils, followed. The son,

instead of standing in awe of his father, began to think himself a man when he was only a brawling, impudent boy. On the first or second quarrel with his father he felt he might abandon the parental roof for the less irksome employment of the stranger. The first principle of all subordination was thus early broken up."

Even the financial gain proved an entire delusion. "The increase of the family receipts, arising from the employment of one or more children as draw-boys, ceased on the first slackness in the demand; for it is evident that the additional sum, we shall suppose of 5s. a week, drawn by the labour of the weavers' children, enabled him to work just at so much lower prices for any manufacturer who might choose to speculate in making goods at the reduced price, in the hope of a future demand." He thus entered on a competition with his fellows for employment at a low remuneration. The market became over-stocked alike with goods and with cheap labour; and the result was a permanent reduction of wages.

"Thus was the employment of their children from five to ten, by the weavers of Paisley, at first an apparent advantage, but in the end a curse; demonstrating that, whatever may appear to be the interest of parents this year or next year, it is permanently the interest of them and their offspring to refuse every advantage in their temporal concerns, which tends

to defraud youth of the first of parental blessings, education; and that Providence has bound in indissoluble alliance the intelligence, the virtue, and the temporal well-being of society. In 1818-9, during the Radical period, there were found full three thousand, Paisley-born and Paisley-bred, who could not read; and the decline of intelligence has been followed by the decline of that temperance, prudence, and economy, which are the cardinal virtues of the working classes; by which alone they can elevate their condition, or preserve themselves from sinking into the most abject poverty."

This narrative bears striking testimony to the nature of the true antidote to misery and want; proving, as Chalmers observes, "that the distress is wholly resolvable into moral causes, and wholly irrecoverable but by moral remedies." In another essay he says, "the education and the religious principle of Scotland have not annihilated pauperism, but they have restrained it to a degree that is almost incredible to our neighbours of the South: they keep down the mischief in its principle; they impart a sobriety and a right sentiment of independence to the character of our peasantry; they operate as a check upon profligacy and idleness." And again of parochial associations for the same purpose, he says, that their work has "all the efficacy of a preventive operation. . . . Their immediate object is neither

to feed the hungry nor to clothe the naked; but in every country under the benefit of their exertions, there will be less hunger to feed, and less nakedness to clothe. They do not cure actual poverty but they anticipate eventual poverty. They aim their decisive thrust at the heart and principle of the mischief; and instead of suffering it to form into the obstinacy of an inextirpable disease, they smother and destroy it in the infancy of its first elements. . . . What Burke said of education, and it holds pre-eminently true of the education of principle, that it is the cheap defence of nations, applies with peculiar force and emphasis to the question of pauperism—the best and by far the cheapest provision for which is the Christian instruction of the people." Here then we find the remedy for social evils, "and we know not a more appropriate monument to be placed over the grave of parish pauperism, than a parish school; nor one that is better fitted to close impregnably up the gate of the sepulchre, and keep its noxious inmate from ever bursting forth again on the society that had so celebrated its last obsequies."

Turning our attention to the other party in the alliance, we proceed to consider the Church of Chalmers as an instrument for improving the condition of the poor.

By the constitution of the Church of Scotland, as laid down by the Westminster Assembly of Divines

in 1645, three orders were established. "It is provided that in each parish there shall be at least one minister, whose office it is to preach and dispense the ordinances of Christianity on the Sabbath, and to labour in holy things among the people through the week; and elders, whose office it is to assist at the dispensation of Sacraments, to be the bearers of religious advice and comfort among the families, and, in general, to act purely as ecclesiastical labourers for the good of human souls; and lastly deacons, to whom it belongs, not to preach the Word or administer the Sacraments, but to take special care in administering to the necessity of the poor." It is important to note the proper functions of these three orders, which are defined by the words Doctrine, Discipline, and Distribution.

We have seen that the theory was to plant a church in every parish, which should embrace the whole of that particular community. Chalmers insisted that this could only be brought about by letting the seats on terms which would secure the presence of the residents within the parochial area, and more especially the working-people, who formed the bulk of its inhabitants. No encouragement was to be given to the attendance of visitors from other districts, however popular or eloquent might be the preacher. At first sight the method of distributing the sittings may seem to be a mere detail; but in

point of fact it involved the necessity for a provision by the State. A rich congregation could no doubt afford to support its own ministry, but in order to attract a poor one, there must be "a preference at every seat-letting to the parishioners, either at indefinitely low seat-rents or no seat-rents at all, which condition can only be made good by an adequate endowment for the clergyman." We shall have more to say about the territorial nature of the Church of Chalmers in a later chapter.

Looking first at the position of the Minister, we may remark that the chief book which Chalmers wrote on charity begins with an appeal to the clergy to study social questions. Is it not strange, he asks, that they should be so ignorant of the science of political economy, and display a "blindly sentimental dislike of a doctrine which stands on the firm basis of arithmetic?" It is this attitude which has led the economist, on his side, "to imagine a certain poverty of understanding as inseparable from religious zeal"; but he too is mistaken in thinking that a policy of "let-alone" (or *laissez-faire*) can be enough to ensure the welfare of the people. "Both seem alike unconscious of the strong intermediate link that is between them, seeing that the chief objects of the one can only be accomplished through the successful exertions of the other. It was for the economists to have discovered the connection between a virtuous

peasantry and, through the consequent effect on population and wages, the greater sufficiency of their means, and their higher status in the commonwealth. But, while it was for them to perceive and point out this connection, it is for the practical educationists alone, and pre-eminently for the Christian educationists, to make it good." In another passage he dwells on the "prodigious force of that moral ascendency which is possessed by a parish clergyman," who aims, indeed, at the eternal happiness of his people, but by the very effort promotes their temporal prosperity. "The truth is that the lessons of the gospel which he teaches are all on the side of reflection and sobriety, and that loftiness of character which consists in the predominance of the moral over the animal nature of man." This "is often exemplified in the abode of a cottage patriarch, where, along with his Christianity, we may witness a sufficiency and a cast of elevation not to be found in the houses of the irreligious and the unholy. . . . The Christianity of the man has engendered a wisdom and a consistency and a self-command that led him to begin well in his entrance upon a family; and so to build up a respectable sufficiency which, with a reckless and precipitate commencement, he could never have attained. An individual Christian is generally in better comfort and condition than other men. A whole parish of Christians would be a parish of well-conditioned families."

Here was one reason for the strenuous opposition of Chalmers to the Poor Law system. "It operates as a dead weight on the ministrations of the clergyman, and stands most grievously in the way of their success. . . . However vigorous and effective his exertions may be, at the most, and while the present system of poor's laws continues, we shall have two distinct populations, each marked by opposite extremes of character. The clergyman, on the one hand, may reclaim hundreds to principle and sobriety, who shall form a wholesome and better class of peasantry. But the parish vestry on the other, remains an attractive nucleus, around which there will gather and settle, in every little district of the land, a depraved and improvident class, whom the temptation of this legal charity has called into being, and who will bid inveterate defiance to all the moral energy which might be brought to bear upon them. . . . Education will make head against mendicity. It will make head against poverty in any other form than that of being fixed and legalised, and invested with the power of challenging, as its right at the bar of justice, that relief which should have been left to the willing sympathies of nature. But shielded and encouraged as it is in the parishes of England, it will stand its ground against every attempt to dislodge it from those innumerable fastnesses which it now occupies; and in spite of every counteractive,

whether by the Christian or literary education of the people, will it remain an incubus on the prosperity and comfort of the lower orders."

To estimate the position of a Scottish minister in the first half of the present century, we must remember the truly national character of the Church to which he belonged. When Chalmers speaks of dissent he uses the word in a very limited sense. There was hardly any real dissent in those days, and even now it is a cause of wonder why the leading churches do not amalgamate. More than once Chalmers expected a move in that direction. He tells us that "the dissenters in Scotland are chiefly Presbyterian, they dissent from the Church on the score of patronage. . . . Our theology is substantially the same with that of at least nine-tenths of the dissenters of Scotland." He calls them the "other orthodox religious bodies." With such rivals he could feel perfect sympathy, and he only regretted that their work should be "left dependent on a precarious itinerancy" which was weak in comparison with the provision for minister and edifice, and above all that "minute and thorough subdivision of the country," that "universal ministration," which were the great advantages of an Establishment.

It is evident that the situation was greatly simplified by the absence of any real antagonism in the doctrine or ritual, or even in the constitution, of

most of the voluntary churches. The minister of the Establishment occupied a place of eminence among them which has not been held by his successors since the Disruption. Religious and charitable agencies have multiplied in the larger centres of population. He who was then the father of his people, is now the head of one among many conflicting sects. It was then a natural thing that he should take the lead in organising measures of philanthropy. It is now in many places a matter of extreme difficulty to bring about any sort of co-operation among the various parties that have to be conciliated and induced to work together for a common purpose.

A serious hindrance to the religious work of the clergy is often to be found in "the mischief of those secularities which have been laid on the clerical office . . . that strange medley of services, by which the minister of a large city parish now feels himself plied at every hour, and beset at every path and every turning point, in the history of his movements. . . . Many a weary signature is exacted from him; and a world of management is devolved upon his shoulders; and, instead of sitting like his fathers in office, surrounded by the theology of present and of other days, he must now turn his study into a counting-room, and have his well-arranged cabinet before him, fitted up with its sections and its other

conveniences, for notices, and duplicates, and all the scraps and memoranda of a manifold correspondence. . . . We are getting every year more assimilated in look and complexion to surveyors, and city clerks, and justices, and distributors of stamps, and all those men of place who have to do with the people in the matters of civil or municipal agency. . . . It is not reason that we should leave the word of God and serve tables."

The grievance is one that Chalmers found very oppressive in his Glasgow ministry, and his remonstrance may touch a sympathetic chord in the breast of city clergymen at the present day. He fought hard against these "thousand preposterous civilities," and, at the risk of giving offence, he declined to recognise the formalities of society in the matter of calls and entertainment. But after all, the burden is a natural consequence of that State connection which he approved. The minister becomes, to some extent, a government official, and he must pay the penalty.

There is another, and a far more serious obstacle to moral usefulness, from which Chalmers contrived to set himself entirely free, namely, the distribution of alms. On the fatal error of associating religion with relief, his opinion was forcibly expressed:—"A more ruinous plurality could not have been devised, by which to turn into poison each ingredient of which it is composed." His own experience on

undertaking city work, was more than once described in proof of this. "On my first movements through the poorest parish in Glasgow, I was thronged by urgencies innumerable, because of my official connexion with the secular charities of the place, and which did invest me with the character of an almoner in the eyes of the general population. . . . What I judged and apprehended as the consequence of this was, that it would neutralise the influence which I wanted to have as a Christian minister. I saw that this would vitiate my influence among them. I felt that it would never do if I were to go among them, first as a dispenser of temporal good things, and then as urging upon them the things which make for their everlasting peace. I felt the want of compatibility between the two objects, and, rather than defeat my primary object, I determined to cut my connexion with the city charities . . . and I will not forget the instant effect of this proceeding when it came to be understood—the complete exemption which it gave me from the claims and competitions of a whole host of aspirants who crowded around me for a share in the dispensations of some one or other benevolent trust or endowment of other days; and yet the cordial welcomes I continued to meet with when, after I had shaken loose of all these, I was received and recognised by the people on the simple footing of their Christian friend, who took cognisance of their souls,

and gave himself chiefly to do with the scholarship of their young, and the religious state of their sick, and their aged and their dying."

In most parishes the distribution of relief had passed into the hands of the order of Elders, whose office was properly of a purely spiritual character, and the effect was no less injurious than in the case of the clergy. "It so mangles and lacerates an eldership as to dissipate all the moral ascendency they once had over our population. . . . No subtle or satanic adversary could have devised a more skilful barrier against all the usefulness and effect of these lay associates of the clergy." The duty of the elder was to represent the minister among the families of a special district. "But they recognise him to be also a dispenser of temporalities, and they have an indefinite imagination of his powers, and of his patronage and of his funds; and their sordid or mercenary expectations are set at work by the very sight of him; and thus some paltry or interested desire of their own may lurk under the whole of that apparent cordiality which marks the intercourse of the two parties. . . . There are two different ways in which an elder may acquit himself—either in the way of easy compliance with the demands of the population, or in the way of strict and conscientious inquiry, so as to act rightly by the fund which has been committed to him. Take the first way of it;

and suppose him at the same time to have the Christianity of his district at heart, and what a bounty he carries around with him on the worst kind of dissimulation! . . . What a sickening duplicity of reception he is exposed to! What a mortifying indifference to the topic he has most at heart, under all the constrained appearance of attention which is rendered to it! With what dexterity can the language of sanctity be pressed into the service, when their purpose requires it; and yet how evident, how mortifyingly evident, often, is the total absence of all feeling and desire upon the subject from the hearts of these wily politicians! How often, under such an unfortunate arrangement as this, is Christianity prostituted into a vehicle for the most sordid and unworthy applications—all its lessons no further valued than for the mean and beggarly elements with which they are conjoined, and all its ordinances no further valued than as stepping-stones, perhaps, to a pair of shoes. . . . It is this compounding of what is fitted in itself to raise the character, with what is fitted in itself, and still more by its hypocritical association with better things, to adulterate and debase it—it is this which sheds a kind of withering blight over all the ministrations of the pluralist, and must convince every enlightened observer that, till he gets rid of the many elements of temptation which are in his hands, he will never

expatiate, either with Christian comfort, or with Christian effect, among the population." If, on the other hand, we conceive the elder to be strict in his investigation, and "firm in resistance to every claim that is capable of being reduced," he will enter into a sort of conflict with his people. "In this case the only fit and effectual attitude of eldership must be given up. He may as well try to look two opposite ways at the same moment, as think of combining the one with the other, and of keeping the people at bay by his resistance to them, on the ground of their lower, and at the same time, drawing their regard on the ground of his better and higher ministrations."

The way in which Chalmers succeeded in separating "the two ministrations, that on the one hand for their temporal, and that on the other for their spiritual necessities," was by reviving the third order of Deacons which had fallen into disuse, and committing the former entirely to their charge. The order was founded on the example of the Apostles (recorded in the sixth chapter of Acts), when, to meet the very same difficulty, they chose out "seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom," and appointed them over this business. How the modern deacons of Glasgow worked under Chalmers will be seen in our seventh chapter on the Parochial System of St. John's. It is enough here to point out that

their main object was in all cases to refer the people back to their own resources, and by promoting self-reliance to render the deaconship itself unnecessary. This, and nothing short of it, was the goal which Chalmers had in view. "Such an order of men might be of important service in conducting society back again to its natural state, as it respects pauperism." But "we do not plead for this as a permanent institution of the church, believing as we do, that it were vastly better for the people if all public charity for the relief of indigence were, as soon as possible, done away."

The best system of church relief is in fact open to the same objection as a Poor Law, and differs from it in degree but not in kind. Like the Poor Law it tends to diminish self-help and undermine charity; to excite vain expectations, and lead men astray from the path of true prosperity. "There is a want of arithmetic among the poor, in virtue of which a monthly half-crown, or a quarterly half-guinea sounds far more magnificently in their hearing than either a penny or three half-pence a day. The daily meal that is sent by a kind neighbour dwindles into a thing of nought when compared with the wholesale allowance which issues either from the City Board or the parochial vestry; and the neighbour himself feels relieved of the obligation that lies upon him by a spectacle which deceives him as

much as it does the object of his sympathy. . . . It is thus that even a kirk-session stands in a loftier guise to the eye of parishioners than is at all warranted by the might or the magnitude of its operations." . . . "The disturbance which an artificial process of charity gives to the natural processes is not in proportion to the quantity of relief that is administered thereby but in proportion to the quantity of relief that is counted upon. The relaxation of economy on the part of an expectant upon public charity, is in the accurate ratio of the hope that is felt, and not of the hope that is realised. It is enough for the purpose of a vitiating influence among a population, to set up a visible appearance of distribution in the midst of them, with even an undefined chance of its being made, on given emergencies, to bear upon one or other of the families." In the case of the kirk-sessions this charitable mirage amounted to "a downright fraud upon the population"; they only professed to "give in aid," and the sum so given was often absurdly inadequate for the support of a person who had apparently no other means, and yet continued to exist. The natural conclusion is that even these little gifts were quite unnecessary. "A very slight impulse indeed on the popular feeling and popular habits, would fully balance the loss of so paltry a ministration." How true is this remark of many

of our modern charities! "Meanwhile," he continues, "if the sessional charity of Scotland is to be kept up, it is but honesty to proclaim its utter insignificance in the hearing of all the people. They should be taught that in trusting to it, they only trust to a lying mockery;" and in another passage, "I must not disguise my conviction that, apart from the support of education and institutions for disease, public charity, in any form, is an evil, and that the Scottish method is only to be tolerated because of its insignificance, and the rooted establishment which it hath gotten in all our parishes. But though I would tolerate it in practice, I cannot defend it in principle—and I speak according to my firm and experimental impressions when I say, that a parish might be maintained in far greater comfort and in a more soundly economic condition, without it altogether."

Here we see the fundamental difference between the way in which Chalmers regarded the problem of distress, and the point of view which has been taken by most other charitable persons or societies. "The English," he says, "are always looking to the way in which we deal out our supplies—to the operation of the visible and positive mechanism of our public charities, for the solution of the difficulty. But this is not the quarter in which they will ever find it. . . . It is not by the adaptation of a piece of skilful mechanism to the relief

of poverty, as its immediate object, that this great problem in political economy is ever to be resolved. It is by leaving the whole matter to the operation of the mechanism of nature, and by keeping in their right tone and action the principles which reside, or which may be implanted, in the constitution of individual men: and the use of churches is to foster these principles, and to supersede that system by which they have been checked and overborne." He says of a good ministry that "their great and primary design is . . . to moralize the people"; but in doing this, they strike at the root of pauperism. "They liberalize the wealthy, and they dignify the poor; and they call forth the slumbering sympathies of the former, and the slumbering delicacies of the latter; and they, each in his own district of moral superintendence, draw into a closer acquaintanceship the people who live in it; and they give strength to the maxims of prudence, and the habits of economy, and the ties of neighbourhood, and the duties of relationship; and thus, on the one hand, diminish the number of the receivers of charity, and, on the other hand, augment the zeal and inclination of its dispensers. And it is by such an operation as this, and not by any direct or artificial agency, which has for its formal and assigned object the relief of human want, that they, in fact, mitigate or prevent the sufferings of want, greatly beyond what any such agency can possibly accomplish."

It was, therefore, entirely to the moral influence of Church and School that Chalmers looked for the improvement of the condition of the poor. It was for this that he valued the Scottish system, supported by the state endowment, and based on the territorial plan, which assigned to each minister his own "particular vineyard" in which to "expatiate," and to bring the lessons of a higher life to bear upon the people. The kirk was its weekly meeting-place for Sabbath service, and close by stood the manse, whence the chief worker issued on those daily rounds which, under the name of "visitations and examinations," enabled him to enter into the home life of his parishioners. Side by side with kirk and manse, the school formed a centre not merely for secular teaching, but for the training of the young in that "education of principle" which was to be the source of all their welfare. A division of the area into districts provided each elder with a "home-walk" of his own, where he could act as a subordinate minister, and become the friend and adviser of a smaller number of families. Finally, the deacons were to be entrusted with the task of dealing with applications for material help, but only as a temporary measure till they also should be free for higher work.

It was to this moral influence that Chalmers referred when he wrote that "in the practical wisdom of our Scottish Church there lies a secret which has baffled the whole political economy of the English

Parliament." The secret was the elevation of character by spiritual forces, as opposed to the "materialism of benevolence."

In view of the many changes which have been introduced in the last fifty years, the question may arise whether it is still possible for Scotchmen or Englishmen to draw practical lessons from the experience of Chalmers. Yet, on reflection, who will doubt its value? We cannot, indeed, restore the old system as it then prevailed, but the best work that was done under that system can be done now. After all, the conditions are not greatly altered. The foundation laid down by Chalmers rests firm and sure for every generation to build upon under its own conditions. The changes that have taken place in both countries are in their nature rather superficial than organic. State education has but increased the desire for knowledge, and extended the area of its dominion. State religion still occupies a territorial position, and even the great increase of rival agencies implies a more active cultivation of the field. Master and minister will always hold that power which their zeal and efficiency command. National character will still be formed by Church and School.

CHAPTER IV.

THE WORKING MAN.

"Patience, labour, sobriety, frugality and religion should be recommended to them; all the rest is downright fraud."—*Burke.*

"THE dearest object of my earthly existence is the elevation of the common people." So Chalmers told the Presbytery and Town Council of Edinburgh, at a time when many were in despair at the misery and degradation of the lowest class among the poor, and many more were alarmed at the spread of revolutionary ideas, and the symptoms of a violent upheaval which threatened the very existence of society. These were the days when England held up a warning to the nations in the extreme abuses of the Old Poor Law; the days of the sudden growth of large industrial towns, outstripping the means of provision for the health and education of their teeming populations; of the rise of Trade Unions, and a fierce conflict between Capital and Labour; of machine-breaking and rick-burning; of Chartism and Reform.

A new force was surging up from the ranks of the working people to compel attention to their grievances, and claim for them a share, if not more than their proper share, in the government of the country. It was a mighty force, as yet uncontrolled and erratic, in the hands of men who looked for progress through the medium of civil strife, or trusted to legislation for the remedy of social evils. Some courage was needed for a public man in those days to profess himself "an unflinching, an out-and-out radical."

And yet the words were no mere piece of rhetoric, but a simple statement of fact. It was the interest of the working people that lay nearest to the heart of Chalmers through all his public labours in Church aud University. It was for them that he organised in school and parish; for them that he studied and set forth the lessons of the stirring times in which he lived.

Chalmers had no fear of the working people. He was fond of quoting a remark "of the sagacious Talleyrand—that there is nothing formidable in meeting with the very lowest of the people if you only treat them frankly"; or, in his own phrase, "that reason will make anything palatable to the lower orders." And, speaking of the repressive side of charitable work, he assures the deacon that even in checking the flow of unwise liberality, "the people themselves will prove his best auxiliaries. He will

speedily enlist their consciences upon his side; and he will feel no difficulty in soon carrying the consent and approval of his little community as well as their intelligence, along with him. Everything must at length command the willing homage and concurrence of a population which has a basis of right to rest upon." He is careful also to explain a phrase which might be mistaken by "those whom, distinctively and not disparagingly, we designate the lower orders—by which we assuredly mean nothing else than that they are of humbler condition, or that Providence has assigned to them an inferior place in the scale of income or society to ourselves. They are fully our equals in all the essential characteristics of humanity."

At the same time he was a thorough believer in the constituted order of society from the King and House of Lords down to the gradations of rank which prevail in the smallest village community. "The inequalities of condition in life are often spoken of as artificial. But in truth they are most thoroughly natural; and it would require the violence of a perpetual stress on the spontaneous tendencies of every society in the world to repress or overbear them. The superiority of one man to another in certain outward circumstances of his state are not artificial but natural, and the consideration in which the occupiers of the higher state are held is natural

also." This social consideration cannot, he says, be disregarded without injury to the good order of a commonwealth. In fact "we aver that when superseded in its operation, one main buttress of the social and political edifice is thereby damaged or destroyed.

"The benefit of a residing gentry lies, not in the money which they spend, but in the moral and humanising effect of their presence. . . . The truth is that the very elevation of mind and manners, caught as if by infection from the higher, forms our best security against an extreme wretchedness in the lower orders." Besides this, "it is a vast accession to a community when there is in it a quantity of mind disengaged for general speculation, and therefore, if under patriotic and enlightened direction, in a state for devising the best institutions and the best economy of things for the well-being of a nation. Law and education and charity and all the collective interests of a state are more likely to be put on their best footing —not, we admit, where arbitrary and despotic power stands associated with great property, but where regulated freedom and respectable property are blended. We feel quite assured of every land of law and liberty, that, with an order of men possessing large and independent affluence, there is better security for the general comfort and virtue of the whole than when society presents an aspect of almost unalleviated plebeianism. . . . The breaking down of this

affluence would ultimately do nothing for the enlarged sufficiency of the lower orders." It is "so much clear gain to the commonwealth; and though, at first sight, the whole good of it may appear to be absorbed by the children of fortune, there is, besides this absorption by them, a reflection on the commonwealth at large—a secondary influence that is felt throughout the extent of society and which goes down to the very humblest of its members. For the best construction of a social edifice, in every large country like ours, we would have a king upon the throne—not rising like a giant among the pigmies or as an unsupported May-pole in the midst of a level population; but borne up by a splendid aristocracy, and a gradation of ranks shelving downwards to the basement of society. We doubt if the other monarchy could stand; or if France, with its citizen king, amid a mighty and ever-increasing swarm of smaller and smaller agrarians, can maintain its present economy for a single generation." And of the value of an aristocracy he says that "there is a soul in chivalry which, though nursed in the bosom of affluence, does not cloister there, but passes abroad from mind to mind, and lights up a certain glow of inspiration throughout the mass of a community. Let it only be a land of intelligence and freedom, and we think that, where there are nobles the common people are not so ignoble. . . . It is thus, we hold, that there

are materials in Britain for the composition, altogether, of a finer and higher and happier society than in America; and that, without one taint of the pusillanimous in the spirit of our people, there might be a deference to rank, and withal a truer greatness of soul and sentiment, than republicanism, with all its coarse and boastful independence, can ever realise."

In an address to the parishioners of St. John's he tells them that the object of their new school is not to raise their children to a higher rank in society, but to improve them in the rank they already occupy. Some indeed may rise; but "were all to aspire, many would be disappointed; for, be assured, that to the end of the world the men of opulence will be the few and the men of industry will compose the multitude. The structure of human society admits of no other arrangement." What he looks forward to is a great advance in worth and respectability, so that citizens of every rank may "enjoy the consideration due to enlightened and companionable men. . . . There will, I prophesy, if the world is to stand, there will be a great amelioration in the life of general humanity. The labouring classes are destined to attain a far more secure place of comfort and independence in the commonwealth than they have ever yet occupied, and this will come about, not as the fruit of any victory gained on the arena of angry and discordant politics, but far more surely as the

result of growing virtue and intelligence and worth among the labourers themselves."

It is remarkable with what perfect confidence he steered an even course between the extravagance of the French revolutionary tendencies on the one hand, and the excessive alarm of the upper classes on the other. He could even smile at such fears at a time when they were awakened by riots and intimidation. "The repeal of the combination laws in England has been attended with consequences which strongly remind us of the consequences that ensued, after the Revolution, from the repeal of the game laws in France. The whole population, thrown agog by their new privilege, poured forth upon the country, and, variously accoutred, made war, in grotesque and unpractised style, upon the fowls of the air and the beasts of the field. In a few months, however, the extravagance subsided, and the people returned to their old quiescent habits and natural occupations. We feel assured that, in like manner, the delirium of a newly-awakened faculty among our British workmen will speedily pass away. They will at length become wise and temperate in the use of it."

On the subject of competition between capitalists and workmen, he says: "We profess ourselves to be on the side of the latter. . . . We should like to see them invested with a certain power of dictation as to their own wages. We should like to see them

taking full advantage of all that they have fairly earned in the negotiation with their employers. We should like to see a great stable independent property in the hands of the labouring classes, and their interest elevated to one of the high co-ordinate interests of the state. . . . Rather than that, at the basis of society, we should have a heartless, profligate, and misthriven crew, on the brink of starvation, and crouching under all the humiliations of pauperism, we should vastly prefer an erect and sturdy, and withal well-paid and well-principled peasantry, even though they should be occasionally able to strike their tools, and to incommode their superiors by bringing industry to a stand."

This trust in the working class did not blind him to their errors. He had little faith in Trade Unions or in strikes, however they might prove effective on particular occasions, or as a power in reserve. He was not impressed by their "grotesque committees" and "curious machinery." He felt that their methods were such as to embitter the relations between capitalist and workman, and so in the long run to hinder the advent of a better state of things. He may have underrated the power of association, but in the main his attitude was fully justified, as the course of subsequent events has shown. For it is still an open question whether on the whole Unionism has advanced or retarded the progress of the wage-

earner. At the time of which we speak it had yet to be decided whether Trade Combinations could be permitted to exist. In the prevailing conflict of opinions and interests he looked for a guiding principle, and found it in the maxim that, as far as possible, "Law should quadrate with morality"; in other words, that nothing should be made a crime by law which would not be felt to be a crime by the conscience. Hence he concluded that the Unionist, in asserting his own rights, must not be permitted to threaten the equal rights of other citizens. If he did so, they could claim the protection of the law. Further than this the state ought not to interfere. The workmen were perfectly justified in forming combinations and fighting, if they chose to fight, with their employers. But it was not thus that, in his view, they would secure their real advancement. We have now to show where he invited them to seek and find it.

In 1832 Chalmers published his *Political Economy*. It is said to have been the favourite child of his intellect. To us it seems a very unsatisfactory production, full, as he admits, of "lengthened and laborious argumentation," and of endless repetition. Few modern readers will have the patience to struggle through this weary work for the sake of the good things that may be extracted from its pages here and there. Compressed within a reasonable space, the material would

have formed an instructive pamphlet, but with vast toil the writer has inflated it into a volume. The plan of the book, however, is interesting, and entirely different from that of most writings on the same subject. It is not a treatise on the principles of the science, but a survey of the various expedients that have been proposed for the mitigation of the evils of our social state; and its purpose is "to demonstrate the futility of them all save one," namely, "the Christian education of the people."

An excellent summary is given in the preface. "The scheme of home colonization; and the various proposals of employment for the people; and the capabilities of increasing capital for their maintenance; and the openings of foreign trade; and the relief that might be conceived to ensue from the abolition of taxes; and an indefinite harbourage for our increasing numbers in an extended system of emigration; and, finally, a compulsory provision for the indigent—all these pass in successive review before us; and, if we are so fortunate as to obtain the concurrence of our readers, they will agree with us in the conclusion that, though all should be tried, yet all will be found wanting. Nevertheless we shall not give up in despair the prosperity of that great cause, the object of which is to provide the greatest happiness for the greatest number—believing, as we do, that the sufficiency of the people's means will at length be reached through the

medium of the people's intelligence and the people's worth; that there is an inseparable alliance between the two elements of their character and their comfort; and that a thorough education of principle throughout the land, though the only, yet is the sure high road to the economic well-being of the community at large."

He takes his stand on the Malthusian doctrine of population and its pressure on the means of subsistence, a doctrine "in our view as irrefragable as the most rigid demonstration"; and the argument is that no increase in their means can bring about any improvement in the condition of the people, so long as it is accompanied by a corresponding increase in their numbers. "The only difference will be a greater instead of a smaller number of wretched families." None of the expedients above mentioned can have more than a temporary effect. They may act as a safety-valve in reducing the pressure; they do not stop—nay, they increase—the generation of the steam. If this be granted, it follows that the problem must be attacked at the opposite end, and its solution must be sought, not in increasing the food and wages, but in limiting the number of labourers that consume them. Labour is to be regarded as a commodity whose price, like that of other articles, will depend on the relation of the supply to the demand. Moreover labour belongs to a special class of commodities, which

are far more "tremulous in the balance" than others, that is to say, they vibrate far more readily in price. These are the necessaries of life, as opposed to its luxuries. "Wheat is a necessary of life. Rum is not. I can want spirits. I cannot want bread. . . . Nor can I, without considerable suffering, make any great abatement in my demand for it." This is true of labour, since "employment is the vehicle on which these necessaries are brought to the door" of the people; or, to change the metaphor, "men must have subsistence, and if employment be the essential stepping-stone to this, men must have employment." Hence it arises that "a very small excess in the number of labourers will create a much greater proportional reduction in their wages," and, conversely, "a small fractional relief will bring back the remuneration to its proper level." This may be done for the moment by an emigration scheme; it can only be done permanently by the growth of prudential habits in the people. They have the matter in their own hands. "They have entire and absolute command over the supply of labour. . . . It is the weight of their own numbers, and nothing else, which degrades and depresses them. . . . Let them but relieve themselves of this, and they will carry their point without all that curious machinery of councils and correspondence and deputations, in which heretofore they have vainly imagined that their strength lay. They would not need, in fact, to call

upon masters; for masters, overcharged with capital, and desirous of extending their works beyond the supply of workmen, would call upon them. Instead of turbulently meeting in the hall or in the field, each might stay quietly at home and at his own business; and the day of a coming enlargement to our labourers will not come one whit later, though they should leave the expedient of a combination for ever untried. There is no other way in which the tables can be turned between them and their masters; so that, instead of workmen begging from capitalists for their employment, capitalists shall go a-begging among workmen for their services."

The Unionist of later days may deem such doctrine very antiquated, and may think that he has found a shorter cut to the attainment of his goal. But after much friction he has only achieved a partial measure of success, and even that is due entirely to the kind of moral improvement which Chalmers advocated, namely, the development of self-discipline, foresight, and intelligence. Unfortunately these good qualities have been restricted to a certain class, which has turned them to a selfish purpose; and the result of Trade Unionism has been to secure an increase of wages for a few men in the prime of life at the cost of want and suffering to the older and younger generations. It may be that a material benefit has thus been won for the higher ranks of labour. But

lower in the scale there is a vast and increasing multitude—augmented by the very action of the Unions—a multitude of unskilled and thriftless workers at the mercy of fortune, in whose case it is still "most piteous to see a population lying prostrate and overwhelmed under the weight of their own numbers." Their existence is apt to be forgotten in the pictures of progress which are sometimes set before us; and the use of such terms as "working-class" and "working-man" becomes a source of error, as Chalmers pointed out in reply to one of his critics. "He has generalised workmen of all sorts and varieties into but one object of contemplation. He reasons as if the foundation on which society rested was throughout of homogeneous materials: and then tells us what a substantial foundation it is, and how it is consolidating every year into greater strength and firmness than before. We reason as if that foundation was made up of successive strata, and express our apprehension that the lowest stratum of all might become every year more putrid and unsound, and so endanger the stability of the whole fabric." The course which Chalmers recommends alone can rectify this perilous condition of society. If the working-men of every rank at length adopt it, they will enter on a new path, where progress is not the privilege of any section but the common right of all. "This is the highway to their independence—a noiseless way on

which they will neither strive nor cry, nor cause their voice to be heard upon the streets."

Where even self-help, backed by the power of association, has hitherto failed, it must be wholly vain to look for salvation from the interference of a government, or any minor regulative body. Yet such has been the expectation with regard to this question of the Unemployed. It deserves special consideration because so little appears to have been learnt from the experience of the present century. The old fallacies are strong as ever in the minds of men, and we are constantly invited to repeat the old worn-out blunders. Writing in 1832, "This," says Chalmers, "is a teeming age for all sorts of crudities. . . . Among others, the favourite device of employment has been acted on to a very great extent. . . . England is rife with this experiment throughout her teeming parishes: and quarrying, and road-making, and breaking stones, and digging in gravel-pits, and the manifold branches of indoor labour in workhouses have all been devised that, if possible, by the products of their industry, their surplus people might earn for themselves their subsistence, or a part of their subsistence. The conception is prevalent all over, and has been endlessly diversified into various ingenuities, alike amiable and abortive. The plaiting of straw and picking of hemp, and various sorts of millinery and hand manufactures, have all been tried and found wanting. The effect is a general depression

in the price of the prepared article, whatever it may be; or if the article be altogether new, the purchasers who are allured to it, are withdrawn from the purchase of other articles. On either supposition, a whole body of regular labourers are impoverished by the weight of these additional products upon the general market; and so utterly fruitless indeed has it turned out as a permanent resource that, in despair, the expedient has been abandoned in many parishes, and the extra population are suffered to lead a kind of lazzaroni life in idleness, and in the mischief and crime which are attendant upon idleness. The truth is that, if home colonisation fail" (as shown in other chapters), "employment in manufactures is far more likely to fail. By the former, a certain portion at least of sustenance is drawn from the earth in return for labour—though inadequate to the full maintenance of the labourers. By the other, something is produced too, but it is not sustenance, but a commodity to be offered in return for sustenance; and which cannot earn that sustenance for additional labourers, save at the expense of all previous labourers. The home-colonist, at work among the inferior soils, may perhaps extract from them three-fourths of his maintenance, and leave the remaining fourth a burden upon society. The workman in a charity manufacture burdens society with the whole of his subsistence. The article he prepares becomes cheaper and more

plentiful than before; but he himself becomes the instrument of a general distress by inducing a dearness and a scarcity on that which is most essential to families."

To show the extent of these experiments under the old English Poor Law, we may compress into a short space the substance of many interesting pages. "There is a limit to the work of a parish; but while this economy lasts, there can be no limit to the number of workmen who, of course, after various expedients and ingenuities have been practised, for the purpose of intercepting them with something to do, at length overflow into a state of total idleness." Thus the "roundsman," so called because he was sent round among the farmers to get their work for very low wages which were supplemented by the parish, became the "supernumerary," wholly dependent on the rates. Sometimes these men were congregated into workhouses and employed by the overseer. Sometimes they were "farmed out to a speculator, who turned the workhouse into a factory," and obtained their services on very cheap terms. Others were set to make a pretence of labour, on roads and in gravel-pits. The value of their work was insignificant. "The truth is that an increasing population can no more be supplied indefinitely with profitable work, than they can be supplied indefinitely with money or with food. It is more for a moral effect than for the

worth of their labour, that these various modes of industry are laid upon them." The excuse was that so frequently put forward by unthinking people at the present day—"Better give them something to do, than that they should be wholly idle." But even this object was not attained, for the work was only idleness in disguise; and the result was the creation of an idle class.

Other bad results followed, amongst which he notices "the bitterness and discomfort which have been introduced into all the departments of service. . . . This system has distempered altogether the relationship between a master and his servants. . . . They are not so careful in seeking work for themselves, as the law has rendered them in some measure independent of it." They are "exempted in this way from the care of themselves, and from all those sobrieties and virtues which are thereby called into exercise. . . . They care little though they be dismissed; and this has often the effect of making them idle and insolent." The master has no choice or authority; they know that he must pay for their maintenance if he does not employ them. "They lose the tone and habit of good workmen . . . and that wholesome discipline of penalties and rewards which nature hath instituted, is put an end to. They become ill-conditioned, both morally and economically, and the fabric of our ancient commonwealth becomes

unsound at its basis, as the olden character disappears, of a hearty, hard-working, well-paid, and withal well-habited peasantry." Moreover, the young generation is started in this vicious system, and "prepared to outstrip its predecessor in the rapacity, and the meanness, and all the sordid or degrading habits of pauperism." It was thus that the benevolent design of "dealing with the unemployed," when really carried out, led to the erection of "a vast nursery of idleness and vice all over England," and, as often happens when the attempt is made to legislate for a particular class, we see it "under the guise of kindness to the stragglers of the community, operating a most injurious reduction on the state and comfort of the whole body."

The effect of legal relief in reducing wages, though admitted by students of the subject, is often passed over as being more of the nature of an abstract proposition than a matter of practical concern. It is a general truth, not always evident in specific instances; for the process usually goes on behind the scenes, unnoticed by the ordinary spectator. "It is on this account that we prize so much the following little narrative by the overseer of Long Burton, in Dorsetshire," which shows in the clearest manner how the rate-aided supernumerary could "force the regular workman within the margin of pauperism. . . . The overseer had three able-bodied

men out of employment, and whom it fell upon him to dispose of. The farmers, all saturated with workmen, could not take them in; and rather than send them to work upon the roads, he applied to a master mason in the neighbourhood, who engaged to take their services at the low rate of six shillings in the week—the parish to make up the deficiency to the three men, so as that they should, on the whole, have fifteen pence a week for each member of their families. The mason had previously in his employment from seven to ten men, at the weekly wage of eight or nine shillings each. But no sooner did he take in these three supernumeraries from the parish at six shillings, than he began to treat anew with his old workmen, and threatened to discharge them if they would not consent to a lower wage. This, of course, would have thrown them all upon the parish, for the difference between their reduced and their present wages; upon perceiving which the overseer instantly drew back his three men, and at length contrived to dispose of them otherwise. Upon this the wages of the journeymen masons reverted to what they were before." Seldom have cause and effect been more clearly indicated.

These are but a few notes on one of the lessons drawn by Chalmers from the history of the old English Poor Law—a history full of warnings for the present generation, and most of all for working

men. They, more than others, need to know the terrible results that followed from the full adoption of a false policy which is often recommended to them now. "And, not till their eyes have been opened to the whole mischief and cruelty of this delusion—not till they see where it is that their most powerful and malignant enemy is lying in ambush—not till they have learned that, under the guise of charity, there has been an influence at work for many years which has arrested the march of the lower orders to the elevation that naturally and rightfully belongs to them, and till they come to understand that it is by their own exertion and self-denial alone that they can win their way to it—not, in short, till the popular cry is for the abolition rather than the extension of pauperism, will our labouring classes have attained their full share of comfort and importance in the commonwealth."

Returning to the subject of population and its effect on wages, how, it is asked, can the people be "converted to the side of their own interest," and induced to live by that rule of prudence which will lead them to prosperity? There is no need for them to be taught the philosophy of Malthus and its bearing on the human race in general. Such large considerations may appeal to a certain number of reflective minds; they are not very likely to influence the conduct of the multitude. But "it is possible for men to bear

an essential part in the workings of a mechanism of whose principles and whose theory they are altogether unconscious—just as the planetary masses are unconscious of the magnificent regularity to which their own movements have given rise." What the people need is the application of a similar force, unseen but irresistible like that of gravity, which will act on the life of each individual and "induce a habit of thoughtfulness, that must insensibly pervade the whole system of a man's desires and his doings—making him more a being of reach, and intellect, and anticipation, than he was formerly—raising the whole tone of his mind, and infusing into every practical movement, along with the elements of passion and interest, the elements of duty, and of wisdom, and of self-estimation. . . . The change will be accomplished surely, though indirectly and by insensible progress, through the means of general instruction, or by the spread of common, and more especially of sound Christian education over the country." This moral cultivation had borne splendid fruit among the old Scottish peasantry. "They exemplified the doctrine of Malthus, and realised its benefits, long before that doctrine was propounded to the world." For, in truth, his philosophy, however it has been magnified and "distorted from being looked to through the mists of controversy," is based on "the veriest truisms of plain and every-day experience, . . . the incontro-

vertible maxims of common prudence or common housewifery." It must be obvious that "the man who counts it enough for himself and his family that they have rags, and potatoes, and a hovel, will rush more improvidently, and therefore more early, into the married state than he who feels that, without a better provision and a better prospect than these, he should offend his own self-respect, and compromise all his notions of what is decent, or dignified, or desirable."

"If we revert to the habit of the last generation, which is still fresh in the remembrance of many who are now alive, we shall find an ample verification of all these remarks. . . . It was one of the cherished and domestic decencies of a former age, transmitted from every matron to her daughters, not to marry without a costly and creditable provision; and the delay of years was often incurred in the mighty work of piling together the whole *matériel* of a most bulky and laborious preparation; and the elements of future comfort and future respectability behoved to be accumulated to a very large extent ere it was lawful, or at least reputable, to enter upon the condition of matrimony. And thus the moral preventive check of our great economist was in full and wholesome operation long before it was offered by him to public notice in the shape of a distinct and salutary principle."

This interesting habit of old times was known as

the "plenishing" or "providing"; it included "a most enormous mass of bed and table linen, an eight-day clock, etc."; and it was even "carried so far that in many instances the grave-clothes formed one article of the preparation."

These were the days "when the good old temperament of hard and honest sat more conspicuously than they do now on the visage of plodding and painstaking, but withal well-conditioned and well-principled citizens; and when, sturdy and well-built in all the cardinal virtues, the grandfathers of our present race, with their homely fare and their primitive habits, were still uninfected by the vice and vanity of modern times. . . . And not till we recall the Christianity shall we ever recall the considerate sobriety, the steady equalised comfort, the virtuous independence of a generation, the habit and the memory of which are so fast departing away from us."

In his evidence before the Parliamentary Committee, Chalmers relates the following parable on Character and Comfort, in which, while we admire the ready wit of the Irishman, we feel that his opponent has the better ground to stand upon. "On the subject of different standards among different people, I beg leave to state an anecdote, which is somewhat illustrative of the different habits of our two populations, the Irish and the Scotch. A Scotchman and an Irishman in Glasgow had got into

converse, and were comparing notes with each other about their modes of living. The Scotchman, with a curiosity characteristic of his nation, asked the Irishman what he took to breakfast; the answer was, potatoes: he next asked what he took to dinner; it was the same answer, potatoes: he finally asked him what he took to supper; there was still the same unvarying answer, potatoes. The Scotchman could not altogether comprehend the mystery of such diet and regimen, and, to be further resolved, asked if he took kitchen to his potatoes. Perhaps it may be necessary to explain that term. With our Scottish peasantry the substratum of the meal is either potatoes or bread; and if there be anything wherewith to season it in the shape of butter or cheese, or any coarse preparation of animal food, this, in the humble nomenclature of our poor, is called kitchen. Now, the hero of our narrative had none of all these things, and so, when questioned by the Scotchman whether he had any kitchen to his potatoes, he, at no loss for a reply, and determined not to be outdone, said that he made the big potatoes kitchen to the little ones. Now, to meet the question in the terms of this anecdote, whether the people will be raised to a higher condition by improving their moral character through the medium of their comfort, or improving their comfort through the medium of character, my own opinion is, that it is not by giving

kitchen to the potatoes that you will moralise the men; but that if you educate and enlighten the boys, another generation will not pass away ere the universal habit of Ireland be the use of kitchen to their potatoes." "Do you think," asks his questioner, "the effect would be the same if the kitchen were acquired by the man as the result of his own industry, as it would be if the kitchen were obtained by a tax upon others?"—"Certainly not," is the reply; "the kitchen being supplied by his own industry is the result of higher principles in the man, which principles would abide with him."

From such reflections we pass naturally to the great fact of the "Sufficiency of the Poor"; a fact which was always in the mind of Chalmers, and indeed is at the root of all his policy towards them.

"The truth is, that there is a far greater sufficiency among the lower classes of society than is generally imagined; and our first impressions of their want and wretchedness are generally by much too aggravated; nor do we know a more effectual method of reducing these impressions than to cultivate a closer acquaintance with their resources, and their habits, and their whole domestic economy. . . . We know not indeed, how one can be made more effectually to see with his own eyes the superfluousness of all public and legalised charity, than just to assume a district, and become the familiar friend of the people

who live in it; and to do for them the thousand nameless offices of Christian regard; and to encourage, in every judicious and inoffensive way, their dependence upon themselves, and their fellow-feeling one for another. Such a process of daily observation as this will do more than all political theory can do, to convince him with what safety the subsistence of a people may be left to their own capabilities; and how the modern pauperism of our days is a structure altogether raised on the basis of imposture and worthlessness—a basis which the very weight of the superstructure is fitted to consolidate and to extend."

Nor is it only in ordinary times that the working people can depend upon themselves. He refers to the occurrence of a very bad season, when the necessaries of life have been tripled in price, and shows how, even under this trial, they will contrive to hold their own by various economies, by dispensing with articles of less absolute necessity, husbanding their fuel, and making an old coat last longer;—"because, and more especially if they be a well-habited and a well-conditioned peasantry, with a pretty high standard of enjoyment in ordinary years, they have the more that they can save and retrench upon in a year of severe scarcity. . . . It is this which explains how roughly a population can bear to be handled, both by adverse seasons and by the

vicissitudes of trade, and how, after all, there is a stability about a people's means which will keep its ground against many shocks, and amidst many fluctuations. It is a mystery and a marvel to many an observer, how the seemingly frail and precarious interest of the labouring classes should, after all, have the stamina of such endurance, as to weather the most fearful reverses both of commerce and of the seasons; and that, somehow or other, you find, after an interval of gloomy suffering and still gloomier fears, that the families do emerge again into the same state of sufficiency as before. We know not a fitter study for the philanthropist, than the working of that mechanism by which a process so gratifying is caused, or in which he will find greater reason to admire the exquisite skill of those various adaptations, that must be referred to the providence of Him who framed society, and suited so wisely to each other the elements whereof it is composed."

These remarks may be illustrated from a period of exceptional distress in Glasgow. "In the winter of 1819-20, extraordinary measures were resorted to, for alleviating the distresses of that period. In particular, there was a subscription for the city at large, and a public distribution of soup, by the Town Hospital, for all the other parishes of Glasgow but St. John's. Whatever opinion may be entertained respecting the wisdom or the efficacy of these

measures, it was obviously expedient that our parish should stand on the same level, in respect of this apparent advantage, with the other parishes. A visible difference, in this matter, was certainly not desirable at the outset of our undertaking; and, in the then violent and distempered state of the public feeling would not have been safe. Our people therefore shared in the subscription; and we had also our miniature kitchen, with its distributions of soup among those poor of the parochial families who required it. I felt it grievous thus to subject any of my people to the humiliating exposure of such an application, so that, instead of being mortified, I was greatly comforted and restored by the almost universal contempt in which this said kitchen was held by them. Their conduct, on that occasion, was an admirable comment on the memorable saying of one of my female parishioners, who is now in her grave—a saying worthy of the land that gave her birth, and which I should like to circulate, and be impressed on all our population. An allowance from a public charity was offered to her, and her reply was that she would not have the name of it, for all the worth of it."

Another passage refers to the same period:—"The condition of Glasgow was perhaps the worst that had ever occurred; it was at the time that radicalism was at its height, and their radicalism had

taken the unfortunate and alarming direction of insisting upon the English law of parochial aid being introduced and acted upon all over the city. I was waited upon by a deputation from a very large associated body of operatives, and they presented a petition for the establishment of parochial aid all over Glasgow. I was enabled to meet it in this way. I observed that I had extricated myself from the general management of Glasgow, and that rather than give an answer, therefore, to the representatives of a general associated body representing the whole town, I would confer with representatives from those members of the body who belonged to the parish of St. John, and that I had no doubt I would be enabled to give a satisfactory answer to their application. The only answer I gave was that I was quite sure that our deacons met every specific application in a kind and patient manner, and that if there was any specific case of distress amongst them I was quite sure that it would be so met. The truth is that it was the mere working of a legal or political spirit which actuated this movement; and when met by a challenge that each should expose his personal wants, there was felt the good wholesome Scotch aversion to come under anything like the cognizance or surveillance of the kirk-session, and so I heard no more of it."

This quotation is instructive in relation to those

outbreaks of sentimental agitation which are so frequent in the winter. Caught up by the inflammable atmosphere of a vague humanity, they are quickly fanned by the newspapers into a conflagration, resulting in a panic. At such a time the right course is to follow Chalmers in setting aside the general allegation of multitudes in want, and pressing for a list of the particular cases in each separate district, in order that they may be handled singly, and thoroughly, and quietly. If this be done, the demand for exceptional measures of relief will disappear, and any real distress that may exist will be reduced to its true and manageable dimensions.

Chalmers was deeply impressed by the "might and the magnitude of those resources which lie deposited among the labouring classes." He observes that it is "a capital illusion that there exists, in this country at least, or we could almost venture to say in the civilised world, an aggregate of two or three hundred human beings living in their own habitations and presenting to view a dead level of the alike helpless and irremediable poverty. There is no such thing. There is a gradation and an inequality everywhere. I know of magnates in the Cowgate of Edinburgh; and scarcely an assemblage of fifty contiguous tenements in the poorest region of Glasgow, where, along with operatives who earned for the time but five shillings a week, there were not others

intermingled who were earning from twenty to sometimes fifty shillings a week." But, apart from this variety of means, he is struck also by what has been called "the power of the poor man's penny," or, in his own phrase, "the power of accumulated littles." It first caught his attention in the case of the British and Foreign Bible Society, founded in 1812, and "drawing a larger revenue from the weekly pennies of the poor, than from the splendid donations and yearly contributions of the wealthy." Another proof is derived from the consumption of spirits—"It is a comfort to know, from the general fact of the sums expended by the working classes on intemperance alone, that after all, and apart from private charity, the *matériel* of an entire subsistence passes into their hands, and that nought but the *morale* is wanting which might impress a right distribution upon it." The fact, he says, can be ascertained and stated arithmetically. "The largest sum yet specified for a poor-rate in Scotland is eight hundred thousand a year, being nearly *six hundred* a year for each two thousand of the population," while in the Cowgate the same number of people spent more than *six thousand* a year in keeping up thirty public-houses. The average consumption of whisky he reckons at £3 a head throughout the country. In an address to the General Assembly of the Free Kirk in 1844, on the means of raising their Sustentation Fund, he

says: "I am only sorry, when some of the Highland brethren were telling us of the inability of the people in some districts to give anything, that I did not put the question, whether the practice of snuffing was at all prevalent among them. Why, I believe that I could make out by the Excise returns that in the island of Islay alone some £6000 a year is spent on tobacco. The power of littles is wonderful. I began with pennies; I now come down to pinches, and say that if we got but a tenth of the snuff used by Highlanders—every tenth pinch—it would enable us to support our whole ecclesiastical system in the Highlands. It is astonishing, the power of infinitesimals. The mass of the planet Jupiter is made up of infinitesimals; and surely, after that, it is in the power of infinitesimals to make up a stipend for the minister of Ballachulish!"

In view of these facts, it was natural that he should set a very high value on the practice of saving. Its extension had been considerable in his own day, but he felt that it was capable of a far wider application, and that the large sums in the banks were chiefly deposited by another class than that of the wage-earning labourer. The sanguine apostle of progress is apt to overlook this point. "He exults in the fifteen millions of deposits to the provident banks of the country; but reflects not on that multitude of mere labourers—the hundreds of thousands, who compose a

distinct and inferior class, that are every year multiplying upon our hands, and who contribute not so much as one farthing to them." And again, "it must be admitted that there is something delusive in the returns made by savings banks, and that they may lead us to infer a much greater degree of an economic habit among the people than actually obtains. A very large proportion indeed of the deposits is made by household servants, and by contributors in easy circumstances." This deduction must still be made from the very encouraging figures often brought forward to prove the growth of thrift in our own times. The habit remains "very far from general," and our best charitable workers are beginning to realise how much they can do to promote it. They can render no more certain and effective service to the poor than by following the advice of Chalmers to the visitor who offered to help in his parish. "The first thing we tell him to do is not to give, but to get from them—an advice which we could offer fearlessly and unblushingly, even in the poorest districts to which we have ever had access, whether in town or country." He thus anticipated the method now known as the Collecting Savings Bank, by which the opportunity for the exercise of thrift is brought home to every door. "It were no difficult achievement for each to make it general within the limits of his own selected walk—and to spread it from household to household, by

making the example of one neighbour tell in argument on the practice of another. As it is we have but rare and scattered instances of such economy among the common people. They have been too much left to find their own way to these most useful depositories for their humble savings. The district visitor could bring the aggressive principle to bear on the habit of repairing to a savings bank, as well as on the habit of attendance on schools and churches—and we are sure with a ten-fold greater result than before, so as to make it nearly universal within his own portion of the territory." The "aggressive principle" was a favourite one with Chalmers. In his *Essay on Statistics* it is explained by the comparative success of two contiguous places of worship in a poor suburb of Edinburgh. One was a chapel of the ordinary type, at which no special effort was made to induce the people to attend the services; the other was a malt-barn with an active missionary. "A house-going minister creates a church-going people." So it came about that the malt-barn gathered in a few months 364 regular hearers from the immediate neighbourhood, while the chapel had not drawn more than 5 in as many years. Whence he concludes that "the force of aggression is to the force of attraction as 73 to 1." Such is the difference "between your moving with it to them, and their moving for it to you."

Let us next consider some of the advantages of

saving. In the first place, it will carry poor people through all the ordinary needs of life without any sacrifice of independence. "Their trivial and temporary applications to the parish are, many of them, founded upon some slight derangement that has taken place in their personal or domestic history—the illness of a few days of the father—or the confinement of the mother on child-bed—or some short suspension of employment from the weather, or the cessation of demand for a week or two. Now, surely, to treat them as if they were incapable of foresight so very brief, is not treating them like rational creatures. It is most desirable that they should be trained to anticipation; and, by contesting these little demands with them, I should like to teach them this first and earliest lesson of it, and so carry them forward in this line of prudential habits, till even summer be made to provide for the deficiencies of winter."

But saving would meet the heavier trials of a period of depression. "It is on the occasion of what are called gluts, or when the market happens to be overstocked with a particular commodity, that a fall takes place in the wages of the men who are engaged in its preparation; and which wages may continue wretchedly low for months together, even beneath the starving point, till the glut be cleared away. Now, if there have been no previous economy among

these workmen, if they have nothing to live upon but the immediate produce of their current day's labour—the temptation is to overstrain and exceed to the uttermost, so as to make up by the quantity of work for the miserably deficient wages now bestowed upon it. And accordingly, it has been known among the hand-loom weavers that, in times of calamity, to eke out a scanty pittance for themselves and their famishing children, the loom was kept constantly agoing by the man and wife taking their turns and sharing it between them during all the four-and-twenty hours —a direct method by which both to increase and lengthen out the glut; or, in other words, not only to deepen, but indefinitely to protract the heavy distress to which the adverse state of markets had brought them. Now, when once the opposite habit, the habit of providentially laying up in store as God has prospered them, shall have become general among labourers, this process would be most beautifully reversed. Men having other resources would not work on such miserable wages; or, at all events, would not overwork, but rather take it easily—and, if they worked at all, would work a great deal less than usual. Many in possession of a small accumulated capital, would betake themselves for the time to other employments—nay, some of them might afford to rise up to play; and turn what wont to be a season of utter helplessness and despair into a season

of holiday enjoyment. And they would make of it a brief while brilliant interval—for this slackening of work would not only alleviate the glut, but shorten the duration of it. It is thus that by dint of accumulation in good times, the inconveniences of the transition period in bad times could easily be weathered and got over in as many weeks, as now takes months—ere the market could be sufficiently lightened of its supplies, and the price both of the commodity and of the labour which gives it birth, were again restored to their customary level."

And more than this. The possession of a reserve to fall back upon will place the workmen at all times in a better position in the labour market. It enables them "to treat independently with their employers," and so control the rate of wages. "They could raise the whole platform of their condition, and lift up its average as well as smooth or equalise its fluctuations."

Best of all results is the moral effect of the habit on those who save. "When once they exchanged the feeling of paupers for the feeling of proprietors, the breath of another spirit would animate the people." It is thus that "a parish saving bank might achieve a wondrous transformation on the state of the people by begetting a sense of property." Other methods of help may fail, but this is found to succeed; for "without the co-operation of their own virtuous endeavours, there

seems to be no possible way of doing good to the labouring classes."

So much for the power of self-help among the poor. The power of mutual help is equally remarkable. It appears in "the nameless daily unreckoned supplies of food and service which pass and repass between next-door neighbours by an internal process of charity among themselves." The amount of this charity is incalculable, but observation shows it to be "incalculably great." It is also far less liable to abuse than that derived from any other source; for it is given to each individual sufferer "in right proportion to the estimation in which he is held by the vigilant and sharp-sighted observers who are immediately around him—of those who have known him perhaps intimately and long, and are therefore capable of a far more wholesome and effectual surveillance than can possibly be exercised by the paid inspectors of a poor's-house. The degree of this spontaneous charity kept up among the contiguous householders of every neighbourhood, may be regarded as a test of the reality of that distress which calls it forth—a charity to which belongs the invaluable property of suiting itself, as if by a sort of self-regulating power, at once to the wants and the merits of its object."

There is a special sense in which the very poorest man may truly be a giver. In the sermon on "The Blessedness of the Giver" it is so powerfully expressed

that we cannot refrain from a full quotation of the passage.

"Let me first take the case of those poor who are really not able to give, but who, by the struggles of a painful and honourable industry, have just kept themselves above the necessity of receiving. Had they been a little more idle and a little more thriftless—a thing which very often they might easily have been without censure and without observation—they behoved to come upon your charity. They could have made good a legal claim to a part at least of their maintenance. They could have drawn a certain sum out of your poor's-fund. But no, they would not. Before they will take this sum they try what they can do by more work and better management. They will not take a fraction from you so long as they can shift for themselves. They do as Paul the apostle did before them; they labour with their own hands rather than be burdensome to others; and that sum which they might have gotten, they suffer you to keep entire for the relief of other wants still more urgent, and of other families still more helpless.

"Now, the question I have to put to you is—'Who is the giver of this sum?' I may take a list of them. I may put down the names of the original contributors, who made it up by their pennies and their sixpences. But there is one name which does not appear in the catalogue, yet nobler than them

all—even the hard-working and the honest-hearted labourer, who might have obtained the whole sum, but refused to touch a single fraction of it—who shifted it from himself and let it pass unimpaired to the lightening of a burden still heavier than his own—who declined the offer; or to whom the offer was never made, because it was known to all that his own hands ministered unto his own necessities. He is the giver of this sum. Others may have parted with it out of their abundance. But he has given it out of the sweat of his brow. He has risen up early and sat up late, that he might have it to bestow on a poorer than himself. It was first gotten from the easy liberalities of those who scarcely felt it to be a sacrifice. But it was gotten a second time out of the bones and muscles of a generous workman. I trust there are hundreds of such in this town and neighbourhood. I offer them the homage of my respectful congratulations; nor am I doing them a greater honour than the sincerity of my admiration goes along with, when I say that they are the best friends of the poor, they are their kindest and most generous benefactors.

"But let me go still further down—even to the case of those who are really not able to give; but who, burdened with the infirmities of age or of disease, or of sickly and deformed children, have at length given way to the pressure of circumstances, and come

under the painful necessity of receiving. They may still carry the same noble principle along with them; and, though in outward deed they are receivers—to them may belong all the generosity of the giver, and all his blessedness. You may not all be able so to labour as not to be burdensome; but all of you are able to do your best—and if you so work and so manage that you are as little burdensome as you can be, your names may be recorded in the book of Heaven among the most benevolent of the species. I love the poor; and I have this very thing to record of them; and I have no doubt that there are some now present, who have witnessed it along with me. Have you never offered any one of them a sum out of the public charity, and received part of it back again? "Our necessities force us to take something; but we shall not take the whole extent of your offer. We request that you will keep a part, and leave us to make a fend with the remainder." Who, I ask again, has given me the sum that is so returned to me? Who is it that has fed the poor and clothed the naked out of it? To whose account am I to put down this sum; more honourable to him who has given it than the golden donation to be seen on the forehead of many a subscription paper? Oh, it is easy for us, who sit at our warm firesides, and our plentiful tables, to throw a gift into the treasury, and live as softly and luxuriously as ever; but when a man of poverty

submits to voluntary hardships, and fears to be burdensome he may have a receiving hand, but he has a giving heart; and the eye of the great Discerner may there see the sacred principle of charity, in its purest and most heavenly exercise."

As in the former case, he adds that "it is not necessary to make the supposition of so much money being offered, and a part of it being given back again. . . . Enough that the individual, by his labour and his frugality, and his honest wish to serve others, makes a less sum necessary to be offered than would otherwise have been sufficient for him."

Such is the manly doctrine of self-help and charity which Chalmers sets before the working man. And he is not content that he should confine this liberality to those of his own rank in life. He will have him contribute also to general objects, and share with those who have greater means in the satisfaction of furthering a good cause. By his contributions in the Church plate he is to support the religious and educational work of his own parish, and by subscription to a Bible or Missionary Society his sympathies are to take a still wider range. "What!" says an objector, "You take from the poor. No! they give.—You take beyond their ability. Of this they are the best judges.—You abridge their comforts. No! there is a comfort in the exercise of charity; there is a comfort in the act of lending a hand to a noble

enterprise; there is a comfort in the contemplation of its progress. . . . Leave them to judge of their comfort; and if in point of fact they do give their penny a week to a Parochial Society, it just speaks them to have more comfort in this way of spending it than in any other." And he continues with some indignation: "Perhaps it does not occur to those friends of the poor, while they are sitting in judgment on their circumstances and feelings, how unjustly and how unworthily they think of them. They do not conceive how truth and benevolence can be at all objects to them; and suppose that, after they have got the meat to feed, the house to shelter, the raiment to cover them, there is nothing else that they will bestow a penny upon."

It is mainly for the moral advantage of the givers that he desires the gift. The mere fact of membership in a Parochial Association "throws them at a greater distance from thriftlessness. . . . The great defence which such a Society establishes against pauperism is the superior tone of dignity and independence which it imparts to the character of him who supports it. . . . A man with his heart so occupied, and his attention so directed, is not capable of a voluntary descent to pauperism. He has in fact become a more cultivated and intellectual being than formerly. His mind gathers an enlargement from the wide and animating contemplations which are

set before him. . . . He stands on the high ground of being a dispenser of charity, and before he can submit to become a recipient of charity, he must let himself farther down than a poor man in ordinary circumstances. . . . He will feel it a greater degradation, and, to save himself from it, he will put forth all his powers of frugality and exertion." In that high spirit lies the true safe-guard of the working men. No bounty can remove distress, no regulation check its increase. "But could we thus enter into the hearts of the poor, we would get in at the root of the mischief, and by fixing there a habit of economy and independence, more would be done for them than by all the liberalities of all the opulent."

The same subject is worked out more fully in the essay from which we are quoting. "After all, what is the best method of providing for the secular necessities of the poor? Is it by labouring to meet the necessity after it has occurred, or by labouring to establish a principle and a habit which would go far to prevent its existence? If you wish to get rid of a noxious stream, you may first try to intercept it by throwing across a barrier; but in this way you only spread the pestilential water over a greater extent of ground, and when the basin is filled, a stream as copious as before is formed out of its overflow. The most effectual method, were it possible to carry it into

accomplishment, would be to dry up the source. The parallel in a great measure holds. If you wish to extinguish poverty, combat with it in its first elements. If you confine your beneficence to the relief of actual poverty, you do nothing. Dry up, if possible, the spring of poverty, for every attempt to intercept the running stream has totally failed. . . . It is quite in vain to think that positive relief will ever do away the wretchedness of poverty. Carry the relief beyond a certain limit, and you foster the diseased principle which gives birth to poverty. . . . Try the other expedient, then. The remedy against the extension of pauperism does not lie in the liberalities of the rich. It lies in the hearts and habits of the poor. Plant in their bosoms a principle of independence. Give a higher tone of delicacy to their characters. Teach them to recoil from pauperism as a degradation."

If we have truly represented the interest of the working-man, we have also indicated the lines to be followed by those who wish to serve him. The Charity of Chalmers does not consist in the distribution of material things but in the growth of moral excellence. It is not a store to supply the wants of the body, but a force to stimulate the energies of heart and mind. It is an education of character in which all alike are called upon to share, those who need help no less than those who have the power

to give. It finds expression in an intercourse which strengthens their better nature by the combined action of friendship and self-reliance. Where the right spirit prevails, the mere instrument of relief will be handled but seldom, and then with wisdom on the one side and forbearance on the other. There will be no room for patronage or servility; but only for united effort in the direction of a higher life.

CHAPTER V.

THE SPHERE OF CHARITY.

"Not alms, but a friend."—*Motto of the Boston Associated Charities.*

In the preceding pages much has been said about the power of self-help, and the dangers attendant on unwise interference with the course of nature. A shallow critic might set all this aside as purely negative. Such is the judgment usually passed on those who recognise the need of restraining the mere instinct of compassion and bringing it "under the guidance of principle, and of a virtuous and intelligent regard to the higher interests of their fellows" —in short combining sense with sympathy. "It may sometimes happen that selfishness, in making her escape from the applications of an injudicious charity, will be glad to shelter herself under some of those maxims of a sounder economy, which are evidently gaining in credit and currency amongst us. And hence the ready imputation of selfishness upon all

who decline from the support of associations which they hold to be questionable. And thus is it somewhat amusing to observe how the yearly subscriber of one guinea to some favourite scheme of philanthropy, thereby purchases to himself the right of stigmatising every cold-blooded speculator who refuses his concurrence; while the latter is altogether helpless, and most awkwardly so, under a charge so very disgraceful. In avowing, as he does, the principle that all the public relief which is ministered to poverty, swells and aggravates the amount of it in the land, and that it is only by efforts of unseen kindness that anything effectual can be done for its mitigation—he cannot lay bare the arithmetic of private benevolence, and more especially of his own—he cannot drag it forth to that ground of visibility on which he believes that the whole of its charm and efficacy would be dissipated." Yet surely it is a little hard that the odium of hostility to the poor should be fastened upon those who are labouring for their most substantial interests, while their opponents "are suffered to sheer off with the credit of all the finer sympathies of our nature." Surely there is "no good reason why all our preferences should be directed to him who has only the instinct without the intelligence—why thought and experience and wisdom should be banished from this department of human affairs." We shall now try to understand more clearly

the nature of true Charity, the spirit that should animate her ministers, and the ways in which they ought to work.

First, what is the field of charitable effort? "We are able to affirm, on the highest of all authorities, that the poor shall be with us always; or in other words, that it is vain to look for the extinction of poverty from the world.[1] And yet we hold it both desirable and practicable to accomplish the extinction of pauperism." What is the difference between them? On reflection it will be seen that *poverty* is a relative term. We may speak of a poor nobleman—"the earl who cannot afford a carriage"; and we may apply the word to a person in any rank of life who cannot maintain himself in the average style of comfort appropriate to his class. Looking at the lower orders in the social scale, we find that hard work for daily bread, and harder work to win a moderate degree of comfort or enjoyment, is the natural lot of a large majority of the human race. But if poverty be irksome and laborious, it has also distinct advantages. It is often, and might be always, a very healthy state. For the poor man

[1] It has been observed that the well-known words of our Lord, so often quoted by speakers on Charity, are somewhat strained by this interpretation. However that may be, we find that elsewhere Chalmers supports his argument by the unmistakeable assertion in *Deuteronomy* xv. 11, that "the poor shall never cease out of the land."

may excel the rich in all the best qualities of manhood; and in that case he is happier, if happiness depends on character.

Charity does not aim at the abolition of poverty, but of the evils which are often associated with it. One of the worst is *pauperism*, or the mean condition of reliance on the help of others in preference to honest work. The word is now mainly used in reference to the compulsory exactions of the Poor Law, but Chalmers applied it to every form of dependence which was not unavoidable. The pauper spirit is degrading to the man who entertains it, and would have no room for existence in a healthy community.

So too with other evils. There is no reason why poverty should imply want or suffering. An aged householder dependent on the kindness of her neighbours may be poor, though not in want—"poor in respect of her own capacity for her own support, though comfortable in respect of the support that is actually administered to her." Hence we conclude that "though the wisdom of man cannot make head against the state of poverty, the charity of man may make head against its sufferings. . . . The condition of poverty, arising from a defect of power, or of means on the part of him who occupies it, will ever, we apprehend, be a frequent circumstance in society; while the wants of poverty, arising from a defect

in the care of relatives, or in the humanity of friends and observers, will, we trust, at length be exclusively done away."

Passing on to the motives and meaning of charitable work, we shall best enter into the mind of Chalmers by reference to the source to which he always looked for inspiration.

He is quite clear and emphatic on the duty of benevolence. "First let me premise the obligation which lies upon all of giving according to their means, either to relieve the want or help forward in any other way the well-being of their fellows. Let us speculate on plans of benevolence as we may, benevolence itself will ever abide a stable category in the ethical system, and maintain its own place as the highest of all the virtues. The great use of wealth is to do good with it; and though in the spirit of a practical atheism we may call it our own, every thought of the original fountain whence it comes, of the Parent and the Governor above who put it into our hands, should remind us that it is not a property but a stewardship. It is true that when compassion is given way to as a heedless and headlong impulse, it often does mischief. But to regulate is not to destroy; and when told that it is blessed to *consider* the poor, we are not to interpret this into a call upon the understanding to overbear the heart, but a call to bethink ourselves, not how to do little but

how to do the most, or how to do the best for them. And it will sometimes turn out that the best thing is to give, and with an unsparing hand, when benevolence may take to itself a free and full indulgence. . . . Some are jealous of all thought in the business of charity as if it savoured of the coldness and rigidity of calculation; but let us remind them that it is the part of the liberal man not only to do, but to devise liberal things. . . . It is not the office of consideration to damp the benevolence, but of benevolence to prompt the consideration," and to find out "the way that is most prolific of blessings to the poor."

Among the published sermons of Chalmers there are two which deal exclusively with Charity. One is on "The Superior Blessedness of the Giver to that of the Receiver." It begins with an address to those who have the means to give, and dwells on the thought that they are privileged to share in the divine attribute of generosity. But if they would enjoy this privilege the act of giving must involve some sacrifice, and not merely a gratification or a bargain. It is only, he says, when we can be unwearied in well-doing, when we can be kind in spite of ingratitude, that we can be called the children of the Highest, who is kind to the unthankful and the evil, and sendeth down His rain on the just and on the unjust.

But if a sacrifice is needed, what shall be the limit? Is not the Christian bound to surrender everything at

the clear call of duty? Yes, if the call be clear and urgent; "but it is also his duty to inform and to enlighten his conscience." He proceeds to answer the question, What is to hinder a man from selling all his goods to feed the poor?

"There are many ways in which a man may show that he has less value for this world's wealth than his neighbours around him. Why, he may do so by putting forth his hand to destroy it. He may set it on fire. He may strip himself of all that belongs to him by throwing it away; but none will give to such fantastical extravagances as these the credit which is only due to the spirit of love, and of power, and of a sound mind. It is not enough then that you prove your indifference to this world's wealth by parting with it; you must have an object in parting with it, and the question is, what should that object be? Now, the feeding of the poor is only one of the many objects for which you are intrusted with the gifts of Providence. You are called upon to love your neighbour as yourself; but you are not called upon to love him better than yourself. Your own subsistence is an object, therefore, which it is not your duty to surrender. This is one limit; and there are many others. If you provide not for your own family you are worse than an infidel. Your parents have a claim upon you. You may be rich; and though I do not speak of it as a positive duty to maintain the rank

and distinction which belong to you, yet you are allowed by Christianity to do so. The New Testament recognises the gradations of society, and it numbers the rich and the noble among the disciples of the Saviour. Add to this that if the whole disposable wealth of the country was turned to the one direction of feeding the poor, what would become of the other, ay, and of the worthier objects of Christian benevolence? Have not the poor souls as well as bodies? Must they not be taught as well as fed? . . . But more than this . . . It does not occur to the soft daughters of sensibility, but it is not on that account the less true, that if every purse were emptied in the cause of poverty, there would be more want and hunger and hardship in our neighbourhood than there is at this moment. . . . It would land us in all the mischief of a depraved and beggarly population. . . . Every honourable desire after independence would be extinguished, and the people of the land, thrown loose from every call to the exertions of regular industry, would spread disorder over the whole face of the country."

We have already quoted the next division of this sermon, in which the poor man is presented as a giver. It concludes with advice to the visitors of the Society for which the preacher is appealing, a Society which has undertaken to dispense the gifts of others. "It is the experience of imposition which shuts many

a heart. . . . It lies upon you to remedy this evil. Convince the givers around you of the judicious application of the money in your hands, and more will flow in upon you. Be vigilant, be discerning, be impartial. Your judgment must be brought into action as well as your sympathy. . . . The duty of relieving want is unquestionable, but there is a way of going about it. . . . Do the thing in such a way as shall relieve the present case; and do not the thing in such a way as shall have the effect of multiplying the future cases."

The second sermon is on "Considering the Poor." It dwells on the true meaning of Charity, and emphasizes the contrast between sentiment and duty. "I call your attention to the way in which the Bible enjoins us to take up the care of the poor. It does not say in the text before us, Commiserate the poor; for if it said no more than this, it would leave their necessities to be provided for by the random ebullitions of an impetuous and unreflecting sympathy. It provides them with a better security than the mere feeling of compassion, a feeling which, however useful for the purpose of excitement, must be controlled and regulated. Feeling is but a faint and fluctuating security. Fancy may mislead it. The sober realities of life may disgust it. Disappointment may extinguish it. Ingratitude may embitter it. Deceit, with its counterfeit representations, may allure it to the wrong object.

. . . The Bible rescues the cause from the mischief to which a heedless or unthinking sensibility would expose it. It brings it under the cognizance of a higher faculty, a faculty of steadier operation than to be weary in well-doing, and of sturdier endurance than to give it up in disgust. It calls you to *consider* the poor."

He proceeds to draw an illustration from one of those romantic tales in which the visitor enters the picturesque and humble cottage of adversity in the guise of an angel of mercy, whose presence dispels want and disease, and whose interest is rewarded by the grateful recognition of a worthy family. Such scenes are not unknown, and serve to cheer the worker. But he must not expect to meet them often. Far less must he be satisfied to dream about them. "To be benevolent in speculation, is often to be selfish in action and in reality. . . . It is easy indeed to come forward with the cant and hypocrisy of fine sentiment—to have a heart trained to the emotions of benevolence, while the hand refuses the labour of discharging its offices—to weep for amusement, and have nothing to spare for human suffering, but the tribute of an indolent and unmeaning sympathy."

And then he turns to the reality. "Let us dismiss these lying vanities, and regulate our lives by the truth and soberness of the New Testament. Benevolence is not in word and in tongue, but in deed and

in truth. It is a business with men as they are, and with human life as drawn by the rough hand of experience. It is a duty which you must perform at the call of principle. . . . You must go to the poor man's cottage though no verdure flourish around it, and no rivulet be nigh to delight you by the gentleness of its murmurs. If you look for the romantic simplicity of fiction, you will be disappointed; but it is your duty to persevere in spite of every discouragement. Benevolence is not merely a feeling but a principle—not a dream of rapture for the fancy to indulge in, but a business for the hand to execute.

"It is not enough that you give money, and add your name to the contributions of charity. You must give it with judgment. You must give your time and your attention. You must descend to the trouble of examination. You must rise from the repose of contemplation, and make yourself acquainted with the object of your benevolent exercises. Will he husband your charity with care, or will he squander it away in idleness and dissipation? Will he satisfy himself with the brutal luxury of the moment, and neglect the supply of his more substantial necessities, or suffer his children to be trained in ignorance and depravity? Will charity corrupt him into slothfulness? What is his peculiar necessity? Is it the want of health, or the want of employment? Is it the pressure of a numerous family? Does he need

medicine to administer to the diseases of his children? Does he need fuel or raiment to protect them from the inclemency of winter? Does he need money to satisfy the yearly demands of his landlord; or to purchase books, and to pay for the education of his offspring?

"To give money is not to do all the work and labour of benevolence. You must go to the poor man's sick-bed. You must lend your hand to the work of assistance. You must examine his accounts. You must try to recover those debts which are due to his family. You must try to recover those wages which are detained by the injustice or the rapacity of his master. You must employ your mediation with his superiors. You must represent to them the necessities of his situation. You must solicit their assistance, and awaken their feelings to the tale of his calamity. This is benevolence in its plain and sober and substantial reality. This is true and unsophisticated goodness."

There may be many who cannot undertake this practical work in all its details. To them he recommends the principle of division of labour. In the treatment of every case more will be needed than the act of giving; "there must be the act of attendance; there must be the act of inquiry; there must be the act of judicious application." Let them do part and employ a Society to do the rest, though no

Society can relieve them of the whole responsibility. For indeed, when full allowance has been made for other claims, the personal duty will remain, and "it is right that every individual among us should, each in his own sphere, consider the poor, and qualify himself for a judicious and discriminating charity."

Division of labour is one important aid to useful work. The local system is another. We must, however, clearly understand the attitude of Chalmers towards the whole question of organising charity. He puts no faith in schemes of any kind; in fact he treats them almost with contempt. "We certainly do not mean to advocate either the potato system, or the cow system, or the cottage system, or the village system of Mr. Owen, or any one system of miraculous achievement. . . . We would raise no positive apparatus whatever for the direct object of meeting and alleviating the ills of poverty. This we leave to the theorists; and we satisfy ourselves with simply asserting that unfettered Nature, working in individuals, can do the thing better than regulation can."

How is this assertion consistent with his strenuous demand for territorial division and a local agency? The answer is that he values them simply for the sake of the single workers. Borrowing an illustration from Adam Smith, he compares their action to that of a Court of Justice in securing liberty to every citizen. To take a special instance: It is not right

for government to interfere with trade; but the existence of a stable government is necessary to give fair play to the forces of nature, and to "all those individual activities by which the great interests of commerce are sustained." In like manner will the parochial system affect the problem of distress. It will supply the worker with a manageable task and place him in conditions favourable to the exercise of his abilities. The work itself will not be done by machinery of any kind, but by the personal exertions of men and women who care for the poor, and have been trained in "that wisdom that can devise aright for the service of humanity."

Assuming that a worker has come forward to make himself useful on these terms; he will ask for more information as to the nature of his task and how to set about it.

He really needs no introduction to the poor. "On their part there is an open door. It is for us to make it a 'great and effectual door' of usefulness." . . . Let him go at random to the lowliest of their tenements, though with nothing but a question on which he wants to be resolved, and therefore not to serve them but to serve himself with the information which he is seeking at their hands; and see whether his interrogation, if but put in the language of courtesy, is not followed up by the language of respect and of kindness back again."

Many people entertain strange ideas on this subject, which arise from ignorance; and the experience of Chalmers may be of use to those who are inclined to shudder at more recent representations of "Darkest England" and the "Submerged Tenth." "When they think of the plebeian swarms who are huddled together in wretched tenements, throughout the lanes and alleys, the dark and dismal and putrid recesses of a large city, there is the apprehension in their minds of something so thoroughly outlandish that they are positively afraid of entering these unexplored habitations—standing in the same terror of their inmates that they would of unknown animals. It was in 1822 that I made a round among the poorest houses which we took at random in the parish of St. Giles, London, along with Mr. Joseph Butterworth of Russell Square, who told me that it was only a few months before since they had made the discovery of the movement being safe. We met the same reception that we should experience everywhere—one of perfect civility, even though on our part we had nothing more substantial than civility to offer—a mere question concerning the state of their health, the comfort of their houses, or the scholarship of their children." This experience was confirmed by his "repeated and personal encounter" with the same class of people in other places. "In this question, the experimental is all on our side, and

the ideal all on the side of our antagonists . . . theirs are the fancies of men who keep at a distance: ours the findings of men who have come close to the subject of contemplation." This goodwill on the part of the very poorest is "not a romance of Arcadia, but a thing of as firm and home-bred staple as any of the every-day occurrences in human life."

And if we seek to trace its origin, shall we not find it in "the kindly influence which the mere presence of a human being has upon his fellows? . . . There is a spell and a sway in human kindness, if it but give the unequivocal tokens of its reality, which even the hardiest and most ungainly of our race feel to be irresistible. This is a law which has been mainly lost sight of in the innumerable projects of our day for the amelioration of society —the sweetening effect of mere acquaintanceship." And in another place, he says, "the man may positively have nothing but his heart to give, but in giving that he has touched the very principle of our nature which brings all its hidden machinery under his power. This ascendency of the moral over the material part of our constitution is no romance and no fabrication of poetry. It is exemplified every day in the living and the ordinary walk of human experience."

But in the case of a District Visitor, "we must provide him with an errand which might explain and

justify his entrance into every house of his special and selected territory." For this purpose it is suggested that he should make up his mind that every boy shall learn to read and every girl to sew; or he may start a library and awaken wider interests. Education of any kind will serve as a capital introduction; and the Collection of Savings is another. But of all means of intercourse, religion is recommended most. "If there be one topic more than another which puts the distinctions of rank out of view, and places high and low on the same even platform, it is that Christianity which tells of the common guilt, and the common salvation." At first sight this statement seems at variance with the strong opinion elsewhere expressed as to the error of mixing up religion with the relief of distress. But we must always remember that the charity of Chalmers was not relief, but a process of improvement which would render it unnecessary; and in that process religion was the motive power. Therefore, the more true religious feeling, the less demand will there be for gifts. "When two parties thus come together on the ground of their common humanity, neither will make the voluntary descent which is implied in the act of becoming a petitioner or dependant upon the other." It was by approaching them in this way that he became "impressed with a profound respect for the delicacy and correct feeling of the common people." The same qualities are no less necessary in

the visitor. There is to be no self-conceit in his attempt to serve, no affectation of superiority. He is to realise that "by putting ourselves under the roof of a poor neighbour, we in a manner put ourselves under his protection, we render him for the time our superior, we throw our reception on his generosity, and we may be assured that it is a confidence which will almost never fail us. If Christianity be the errand on which the movement is made, it will open the door of every family; and even the profane and the profligate will come to recognise the worth of that principle which prompts the unwearied assiduity of such services. By every circuit which is made amongst them, there is attained a higher vantage-ground of moral and spiritual influence. . . . This is the home walk, in which is earned, if not a proud, at least a peaceful popularity —the popularity of the heart—the greetings of men who, touched by even the cheapest and easiest services of kindness, have nothing to give but their wishes of kindness back again; but in giving these have crowned such pious attentions with the only popularity that is worth the aspiring after—the popularity that is won in the bosom of families, and at the side of death-beds."

If the visitor is to win the power of moral usefulness, he must beware of almsgiving, and keep ever in mind the true object of his mission, which is, not to subsidise, but to elevate. "We utterly mistake the

common people, and are led to think of them most ungenerously, just from the absurd way in which we ourselves deal with them. Let any man place himself in a conspicuous station on a street or on a highway, and thence scatter money for half an hour among the passengers—we are not to wonder though in a few minutes many hundreds should throng around him, and join in the scramble or uproar which he has himself created. And the very same exhibition will be made of our nature, should a district visitor virtually though not directly or literally announce himself as a scatterer —whether of money or of things purchased by money, among the inhabitants. There are many ways in which the intelligence can be given; and if once given it will soon spread. A distribution of coals will do it—laid down in visible deposits, by carts or half-carts here and there, at the doors of certain selected householders. Or a general parting of old clothes will do it—made up of cast-off suits from the benevolent in all parts of the town, and piled together in some well-known rendezvous for one of its destitute parishes. Or the notification sometimes made from a shop-window will do it—of ladies' work taken in here, and hence given forth in behalf of the poor. Or the local missionary will do it, whom some wealthy philanthropist, be it male or female, has intrusted with money for any necessitous he might meet with in his rounds, and who for the credit of his employers lets

out the secret of their liberality. We are not to marvel if, in the train of such indiscretions, there should ensue among the people a general restlessness —an appetency and demand which never would have arisen spontaneously from among themselves, and which owe all their urgency to the cause *ab extra* that has excited them—a disturbing force that has unsettled many of the families, who, now agog from their wonted quiescence, are plying such claims and applications for relief as otherwise they never should have dreamed of. It is not to be told how much this new element, of agitation it may well be called, is fitted to embarrass the operations of the philanthropist. In all the other ways of well-doing which we have ventured to prescribe for him, he could have made satisfactory progress—progress in the number of deposits made to his savings bank—progress in the number of juvenile attendants upon his schools—progress in the number of contributors to his benevolent associations and the yearly amount of their offerings—progress in the style and keeping of their dress and houses and furniture; and as the general result of the whole, even though not one farthing had been bestowed on indigence, a more plentiful enjoyment among the families than heretofore of the comforts and necessaries of life. If such a result have never been known to arise from the operations of the mere money-giver —if he have taken a district in hand, and is mortified

to find that with all his liberalities, he has utterly failed to spread over it the face of a larger sufficiency or contentment than before—if envy and ingratitude and clamour and rapacity insatiable be all the returns he has met with, and without any sensible abatement of the raggedness and filth and other symptoms of penury which first lured him to this enterprise—then let him be made to understand that, for the purpose of doing aught like substantial or permanent good, something more is necessary than to *compassionate* the poor, he must also *consider* them; and let him learn at length that there is indeed a more excellent way of charity than that to which his own headlong sensibilities have impelled him."

The more excellent way of Chalmers is indeed the very opposite of a system of distribution. His visitor undertakes to combat all the evil habits prevalent among his people, and encourage all that is good, certain that if he can improve character, the improvement of circumstances will follow as a natural consequence. He is not there to flatter the poor or to display any "sickly tenderness of feeling" towards them. His rule is that of Moses—"Thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty; but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour.[1] . . . He should tell them frankly and fearlessly both of their duty and his own, and that it is as much their part to

[1] Lev. xix. 15.

be moderate in their demands, as it is his to be liberal in his dispensations of charity. He should lecture them well on the virtue of not being burdensome to others; and not be sparing of his most serious remonstrances, when he comes to observe that they have been practising on the simplicity of the benevolent, that they have been making a trade of their alleged poverty, and that the ill-gotten money thus obtained by them they have spent worthlessly or even carelessly. Let them know that you will not by your heedless and indiscriminate giving counteract the wholesome discipline of nature; and that if they will persist in being lazy epicures or irreclaimable drunkards, they must just be left to the fruit of their own ways, or to feel the weight of those chastisements which both indolence and dissipation are sure to meet with, and rightly, at the school of experience. Proclaim in their hearing that while you wish yours to be a beneficent, you wish still more anxiously that it shall be a moral administration; and that, seeing the great use of money is to do good with it, it shall be one of your prime concerns that you shan't do evil with it, by ministering to the vicious habits or propensities of those whose part it is, ere they draw on the help of others, to strive how much they can help themselves by doing their uttermost to labour diligently and live soberly. They know nothing at all of the common people, who think that they will not bear to be

told of these things; nay, that they do not look approvingly on, when they see one of their suppliant but rather ill-doing neighbours thus treated by the visitor of their district with the freedom and fidelity of an honest friend. The man who deals in this peculiar, but certainly most rational and healthful style of philanthropy, is sure to carry in full the popular conscience and sense of right along with him."

The way to improve the condition of the poor is to stimulate self-help and to draw out the abundant resources already existing among them, instead of introducing supplies from without. The following passage shows the sort of work required in cases of apparent need. It begins "with the first applicant who offers himself, and he finds you at perfect leisure to attend to him—to take up his case and most thoroughly to investigate it—to calculate his means and his facilities—to make inquiry after his relations—to ascertain what work might be provided for him—to arrange perhaps some method with a neighbour, as cordially disposed against pauperism as you, for taking him into employment, and making his industry available still to his maintenance—to shift away his application by some temporary aid from the purse of unseen charity—in a word, to ply every expedient for disposing of him better than by admitting him on the roll of your pauperism. . . . After the first has been disposed of, a second comes at a

longer or shorter interval, and he finds you still better prepared for him than before; more skilled in the treatment of such applications; more intelligent about the resources of humble life; more able to acquit yourselves prudently and even popularly by every new act of intercourse with the poor; more rich in experience and knowledge; and withal, more dexterous in the talent, not of so shifting the request away from you as that your petitioner shall starve, but of so shifting it away from you as that he shall be in a better condition than if he had been made a pensioner of yours. Let this be persevered in for a little, and . . . the thing which now looks so formidable in the distance, will, on the actual encounter with it, dwindle into a very moderate and manageable affair. Both the facility and the success of it will very much astonish yourselves."

The difference in method between the charity of Chalmers and that which arises from uninstructed kindliness, is well shown by two instances under the familiar subject of clothing.

In the first case he stopped a design for providing clothes. "I had an elder who was a person of great benevolence, but not so judicious and discriminating in this instance as I would have liked; for when I instituted the Sabbath-school system, it was reported to me that he was devising, and had gone a considerable length in forming—and the

scheme looked feasible enough—a local Sabbath-school clothing society for the parish of St. John's. Sir, said I to him, your society will blast our Sabbath-school enterprise; I wish to have 1200 scholars, do you mean to clothe all these? No, said he, only the most necessitous. Well, said I, but all the rest will wait their turn to be clothed, and we shall get no more than a fraction. My object is, that they should come with the clothes they have on, so do not embarrass us with your society. I accordingly got the society knocked on the head. You may go forth with perfect safety, having this inscription on the forefront of your enterprise—'Education for all'; but what would be the effect if you were to go forth with this inscription—'Money or meat for all?' If you go forth with that inscription it will require very little effort on the part of the people, by a trifle more of dissipation or of indolence, to qualify themselves for relief in that way."

In the second case he took pains to carry out the opposite plan of teaching the people to clothe themselves:—"The same local and aggressive system which I found so productive of scholars, both in Sabbath and common week-day seminaries, I tried with equal success in the institution of little home sewing-schools for girls. This species of education is peculiarly called for in Glasgow and all similar manufacturing towns—where many of the young are transplanted

at a very early age into the public works, and without availing themselves even of the briefest interval for obtaining an acquirement of such importance to good housewifery; and the consequence is a general ill-conditionedness among that class of families in respect of clothing, due, it is well known, to the incapacity of the mothers for any sort of needlework. To remedy this, we determined to provide them with an opportunity. . . . A very simple machinery sufficed for the accomplishment of our object. We calculated that, as the lessons of a single year might do for the elements of plain sewing, there could not be so many as one in fifty attending at a time on this branch of education, confined as it was to one sex—at which rate half-a-dozen small household seminaries, with an attendance of thirty on each, would meet the demands of a population of nine thousand. For the completion of this arrangement, we succeeded in getting as many decent female householders to undertake, for a salary of five pounds a year, and the weekly payment of twopence from each of the pupils, that they would receive into their own houses all of their own vicinity who might require this education at their hand. The salary in each instance was made out by the contributions of five ladies, who visited both the schools and the families to which the scholars belonged. One most important practice in these little institu-

tions, was that each pupil in turn should take charge of the apartment in which they met, and keep it in right order, after which they were expected to do the same in their own houses—a practice carried by them into visible effect, and so as to humanise, in a way that was quite noticeable, the aspect of their own homes. I look back with the greatest pleasure to this experience, for never was there an operation so thoroughly pervading. The yield of scholars exceeded our previous computations; and whether I looked to the improvement in the appearance of the girls and change for the better of their domestic habits which ensued from it, or to the recognitions which took place between the visitors and their young charge when they met on the pavement and exchanged the notices of cordial acquaintanceship with each other, I could not but feel the vast importance of a well-directed agency of ladies for speeding on the work of civilisation even among the most ungainly of our city multitudes."

From such examples it is evident that help, in the true sense of the word, is a matter of wise personal effort, depending little on machinery, and even less on money. "To be effective in such a walk of benevolence as this, it is not necessary to be rich. Should, for example, the defective education of a whole district be repaired by one individual, without the expense of a single shilling, and that by the mere

force of moral persuasion—he prevailing upon every parent who required urgency upon the subject to send all the children of a right age to a week-day school upon their own charges—or, should another individual . . put a debt which bears most oppressively over one of the families into a sure and rapid process of liquidation; and that, not by advancing one fraction, but by simply recommending the expedient of a small weekly deposit; and such instances as these be varied and multiplied to the extent that is conceivable—would not this be enough to prove that it is not by the influence which lies in wealth, but by the power which resides in the moral elements of intelligence and affection that the good is to be accomplished? The weapons of this warfare are advice, and friendship, and humanity, at all times ready, without being at any time impertinent; and the well-earned confidence which is ever sure to follow in the train of tried and demonstrated worth. These, when wielded for a time by the same individual on the same contiguous families, will work an effect of improvement which can never be attained by all the devices and labours of ordinary committeeship."

In fact, the possession of considerable means is a distinct hindrance to the visitor. If the ideal parish is to be a model of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth, it will prove hard, though not impossible, for the rich man to enter into it. One danger at the very outset

"will arise from a tacit comparison in his mind between his own standard of comfort and theirs, whence he may be precipitated into a strong and exaggerated view of the destitution or even positive wretchedness of the people. He must just take this general standard of comfort as he finds it, and never once think of the herculean attempt, an attempt which never could succeed in that way, to raise the standard by the profusion of his largesses for better food or furniture or dress than that to which they have been habituated. It is not thus that we shall ever elevate the style or enjoyments of the common people—a consummation only to be gained by the gradual rise and refinement of their tastes."

The deacons of St John's Parish were drawn from all ranks, and "it was our experience that the applications for public relief were fewer from sections under the superintendence of a clerk, or even a mechanic, than from some that were under the superintendence of an affluent and prosperous citizen; the former intercepting such applications by finding a way to those internal and surely better resources which he knew how to draw upon, the latter finding it easier to meet the alleged necessity by liberalities of his own. It was instructive to observe that the public or sessional fund was not the better but the worse of such liberality—being exposed thereby to the demands of that still unsatiated rapacity which

itself had excited and set agoing, and which but for it had never been called forth."

Yet he would be unwilling to dissociate the rich from these labours of love. "There is a right style of management by which even they might neutralise the evil which often springs from the imagination of their unbounded affluence. In the first place, it is the more special duty of a visitor in this condition of life, when he does give, to give in secret. But in the second place, it were well to let the object of his bounty know that what he does give is at his own expense, therefore with a personal sacrifice on his part, and not as the agent of a society or an almoner for others. They utterly misconceive the poor, who do not understand how this simple revelation should call forth a delicacy on their part which operates as a check on their else indefinite demands and expectations. And there are other and most legitimate expedients. . . . There is one way in which he might earn golden opinions, even from those whose applications he may feel it his duty to set aside. He might crave their indulgence. He might represent the other and more urgent demands upon him. He might state what the objects of general utility are which he should like to provide for, and what the cases which are greatly more helpless and destitute than their own. He might point to a poorer family beside them, with its dumb or deranged or

otherwise impotent and disabled children, and make it palpable that the less they draw upon him, the more he will have to bestow on these. . . . Such an appeal he will have the happiness of finding to be often irresistible." It will even draw forth "positive offerings" from those who seemed to stand in need of help themselves.

Allusion has been made to the duty of secrecy in almsgiving, which is specially incumbent on the rich. The Bible tells us "that our alms should be performed, not with the sound of a trumpet—not to be seen of men; but that our left hand should not know what our right hand doeth, or they on our left should not know what we are doing to those on our right." The visitor "is not called upon to stand forth in the general aspect of an almoner, but rather in the general aspect of a friend. . . . On the principle of a readiness unto all good works, he may act incidentally as an almoner with the few who require or would be the better of such a ministration. But this need not be the general, and far less the avowed character in which he appears amongst them. His moving principle we have all along supposed to be, the doing of that which is best for the good of his fellows." Friendship may be openly displayed, but "alms like prayers should be done in secret, when doors are shut, and the two or three who are met together are only seen by their Father who is

in heaven." We have already noticed that "there is a present chastisement in the breaking of this commandment," because "when once the secret of his liberalities breaks out," all the families "will become the keen competitors for his bounty."

But here we are met by another difficulty. The visitor must give practical proof of his sympathy. "More particularly if he want to preserve that moral weight and that hold on their confidence and good opinion which form the real secret of his power, it must be his care not to incur the character of a selfish, narrow, close-fisted pretender to benevolence, and who belies all his professions of it whenever he is brought to the trial, and any surrender of money is required at his hands." We find too, that "the same Bible which enjoins a secret almsgiving, also bids us make our light so shine before men that they may see our good works." . . . While then there are occasions on which the strictest concealment of our beneficence is called for, there must be occasions too on which it is desirable that it should become manifest to all men—not of course for the purpose of display, but at least for the purpose of vindication. And it is fortunate that we need be at no loss for such opportunities of well-doing as might admirably serve this latter purpose. The education of some dumb boy it may be in one or other of his families,—the promise, and that

by purchase if necessary, of a place in an asylum for one of their blind—the pensioning, when there is no such asylum to receive them, of a poor cripple or idiot, or in any way helpless victim of accident or disease—the generous subscription, which if it meet not the whole necessity, might lead the way to others and so enlist the charity of the little neighbourhood for the mitigation of some disaster, that, in the shape of a burning, or the fall of a crazy tenement, or the death of his horse, may have befallen one of the poorest of the householders—we say it is well that our philanthropist can in these various ways make full proof of his liberality. . . . And there are countless other occasions . . . in which . . . a large-hearted beneficence . . . brings no corruption along with it, nay, might subserve the direct and unquestionable good of all in his locality —as in the erection and endowment of a church, or district school, or hall for a library and savings bank and well-regulated newsroom, where lectures too might occasionally be given, and social meetings be held. . . . A thousand other things might be specified—a well, a pavement, a sewer; if in the country, a little commodious bridge for the benefit of the lieges, or the opening of a play-ground for their young, and many other sorts of liberal devices." One of these minor "devices," which he adds in a footnote, is too good to be omitted, namely, "the

felicitous conception of a liberal and large-hearted friend of my own, who, on a winter day of bitter cold, sent for a glazier, and commissioned him to go along both sides of the Canongate, and replace every broken pane that he found in any of the houses—a measure by which, at the expense of a few pounds, he tempered the pelting of the pitiless blast on the tenement of many a poor family."

From all this it is evident that the charity of Chalmers would make a larger and not a smaller demand upon the generosity of his disciple. He asks for more to be given, not less—but for more wisdom also in the giving. In place of "the ministration of those beggarly elements which serve to degrade and to impoverish," he would call forth "a charity whose touch does not vilify its objects."

"With these cautions we should think that a poor district might be safe even in the hands of a rich man. . . . We desiderate a few such, though not, it is our earnest assurance to each, for the sake of his money wherewith to relieve the general indigence of their families; but for the moral effects of his presence in the midst of them, and for our desire to see a closer and kindlier amalgamation among the various ranks and orders of our commonwealth." Only, whatever his station may be, let him remember that "the main good that he doeth, and by which he most emphatically acquits himself as the benefactor

of the poor, is by working out this lesson in the midst of them, that their own resources are the best securities against want, and that they themselves might indeed be their own best benefactors."

It is a common thing to hear the giving of "doles" condemned, even by those who practice it themselves. What is a dole? We may thank Chalmers for a very vigorous definition of the term when he pours contempt upon "those petty and oft-repeated, while heedless liberalities, by which many an indolent sentimentalist scatters poison on every side of him." And yet on the very same page he refers with approval to the occasional gifts which may pass without harm between the visitor and those amongst whom he works, "the little presents of courtesy by which he does not sink but signalise them." These are not reckoned as injurious, but are mentioned along with "the schemes of economy and management, . . . the counsel, the service, . . . the cheap and simple attentions, . . . and those thousand nameless graces and benignities by which the accomplished female can light up a moral gladness in the hamlet which she has selected as the theatre both of many duties and of many friendships." The point of distinction is in the last clause. Duty and friendship must come first, and then the courteous gift may follow. In this, as in many other passages, we find a careful choice of words; for the poison of the dole lies in its combination of pettiness and

repetition with that heedless and sentimental indolence which is the very reverse of consideration for the poor. So in the one case we have a kindly token of goodwill, in the other a mockery of need.

But as yet we have not clearly explained what is the duty of the visitor when confronted with absolute distress. "Are there not cases of real necessity, which, without the utmost hardihood, even cruelty, it were impossible to pass by? . . . And does not the Bible expressly tell us to give to him that asketh, to give even to the evil and the unthankful—nay, most specific of all, to give *alms* of such things as we have? We are aware that to enjoin secret almsgiving is not to proscribe all almsgiving, and we accept of this qualification; but there is such an aspect of cold-bloodedness in the whole speculation of these foes to public charity, that we should like a distinct statement from themselves of what that is which we owe to humanity, when a case of distinct undeniable suffering and want comes in authentic exhibition before us."

So Chalmers states the case against himself. His answer is distinct and plain. "There should be no blinking of this question; and it were the symptom of a weak or a worthless cause, did we seek to evade it. We desire no exemption for our philanthropist from any of those moral obligations which, whether morally or Christianly, are alike binding upon all; and all we claim for him is the privilege of ascertain-

ing the real state of every applicant who lays the case of his necessities before him. . . . All that we insist for is, that he who seeks of another's bounty, shall also submit to another's scrutiny. In the denunciation just quoted upon him who steels himself against a brother's imploring cry, it is presupposed that he knows the cry to be a true one—'If he seeth his brother have need.' Give him then a sight of the necessity, that he may know what he is doing; and when once it is made to stand unquestionably and unequivocally before him, it were a violence to every principle whether of humanity or religion should we deny, that if he indeed have of this world's goods it is his duty, his clearly imperative and incumbent duty, not to stifle the impulses of compassion, but freely and fully to give way to them—to clothe the naked, and feed the hungry, and provide accommodation for the houseless and homeless wanderer."

It would not be easy to speak in clearer language. In the face of real distress he admits in full the obligation to relieve, but on the one condition of full knowledge of the case. And he maintains that where the poor are truly known and wisely treated, the need of such intervention is extremely rare.

Thorough inquiry, therefore, must precede relief. It includes two things. There is to be "a searching scrutiny into the state of every asker, and then a full consideration of what is best, as well for his moral

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as his economic advantage." Moreover, this scrutiny is to be made without harshness—"it ought to be conducted with the most perfect kindness and courtesy and delicacy." This may seem difficult; but "we ask if there be not room enough in a man's character for the wisdom of the serpent along with the gentleness of the dove. That we may ward off the undeserving poor, is it necessary to put on a stern and repulsive front against all the poor who offer themselves to our observation? The way, we apprehend, is to put forth patience and attention, and to be in the ready attitude of prepared and immediate service for all applications in the first instance; to conduct every examination with temper and kindness: and surely it is possible to do this, and at the same time to conduct it with vigilance. Exercise will soon sharpen the discrimination in these matters."

Where a local system is established the worker starts with a considerable knowledge of his people. "And he has means and opportunities without which the mere general philanthropist finds himself altogether helpless. . . . With all their pains and all their possible regulations, let us assure these administrators of charity for a whole city that they will never reach, not even approximate to our deacon, in that minute and thorough intelligence of every case which his frequent visits and the constantly-growing familiarity of months, perhaps years, with the families

of his own little vineyard, enable him to acquire, far less in the tact and adaptation and flexibility wherewith he can fit himself, precisely as is best in the ever-varying circumstances, to the necessities and the condition of every new applicant. The starch uniformity of procedure which is characteristic, because unavoidable, in the affairs of a large superintendence, does not and cannot admit of those manifold adjustments to each individual peculiarity, which the member of a small parochial court, within the limits of his own subdivision, can so easily practise, in the exercise of a discretion becoming sounder with the experience of every day." The neighbours, also, will help his inquiry. "His people will not like him the worse when they see him acting in a sound, judicious, and experimental way with them. They know how to appreciate good sense as well as we; and they admire it, and they have an actual liking for it. They are scandalised when they see kindness lavished upon the unworthy. . . . It speaks so home to their sense of right that each man should work and save for himself rather than be burdensome to others, and that relatives and neighbours should be helpful to each other."

Investigation will sift away the barren earth and leave a small residue of precious metal to be coined. The worker on these lines "will find, as the effect of a proper wisdom and wariness on his part, that one or

two simple and manageable cases are all which are left to him. Indeed, one of the greatest beauties and benefits of this district system is, that it gives such advantage for discrimination; and so, while it relieves from the counterfeit, it enables one more and more to concentrate his attentions on the actual and the deserving poor—in beneficence to whom there is enjoyment of the highest sort, the happiness and luxury of doing good. And, beside the enjoyment, we promise that he will be astonished at the lightness and facility of his task—so as, at the end of the year, and after having rightly acquitted himself among two or three hundred human beings, and that in the most unlikely and outlandish territory which he chooses to select, he will realise in the little history of his proceedings, Hannah More's exclamation—'O how cheap is charity, O how expensive is vanity.'"

Of inquiry as a guide to right action, we may take the following example:—"Crime, that fertile source of pauperism, has exposed us to occasional demands, most of which have been reduced or disposed away from us by investigation. A person under sentence of transportation, had left his infant daughter a likely burden on the parish. The application in its behalf was made by two aunts, when, on inquiry, it was found, first, that a pension, due to the father, could be fairly detained for the maintenance of the child; and secondly, that the affection

of its grandmother prompted her to offer this maintenance, on condition of being allowed the keeping and society of the child under her own roof. We just mention this as an instance, out of the many, of the power of patient investigation in conducting us, either to some resource, or to some right feeling, on which a necessity, that looked alarming at the outset, is at length done away."

Another story may well be told in full, for the very clear light which is thrown upon the methods and principles of Chalmers in the treatment of distress.

"There was a case that comes vividly home to my own recollection, that of a mother and daughter, both of whom were afflicted with cancer; I said to one of my agents that we really must interfere in this. The agent, who was a very sensible and enlightened person, and taught a Sabbath-school in the place, replied, 'I would certainly have asked the Session to have interfered, but I do not like to arrest a very beautiful process that is now going on, and by which the most timely supplies of aid and service are now pouring into the household.' I did not want to deprive the neighbours of the opportunity of exercising their kind affections when they were so willing to do it; I was in the habit of visiting them occasionally, but the topic of their temporal distress was never obtruded by them upon me, and

never once introduced by me to them; and I was perfectly assured that everything was going on rightly, through the mere workings of the natural process, left undisturbed by the operation of a public and proclaimed charity. The case was this: A mother and daughter, the sole occupiers of a single apartment, were both afflicted with cancer, for which the one had to undergo an operation, while the other was so far gone as to be irrecoverable. A case so impressive as this required only to be known that it might be met and provided for; and, on the first warning of its necessity, a subscription could easily have been raised, out of the unforced liberalities of those who had been attracted from a distance, by the mere report of the circumstance having made its natural progress to their ears. And what then was it that superseded the necessity of such a measure? The exuberant and as yet untired kindness of those who were near, and whose willing contributions both of food, and of service, and of cordials, had lighted up a moral sunshine in this habitation of distress. Were it right that any legal charity whatever should arrest a process so beautiful? Were it even right that the interference of the wealthier at a distance should lay a freezing interdict on the play of those lesser streams which circulate around the abode of penury and pain? We want not to exonerate the rich from their full

share in the burden of this world's philanthropy; but it is delightful to think that while, with their mightier gifts, an educational apparatus could be reared for good Christian tuition to the people, and good scholarship to their families, and so a barrier be set up against the profligacy of cities, there is meanwhile a spirit and a capability among the poor wherewith it is easy to ward off the scarcely inferior mischief of a corrupt and degrading pauperism. The history of this case is, that the mother died first, and the daughter died in about a year and a half after the commencement of my acquaintance with them, and I told the person who stood on as a kind of observer, not to allow these people to suffer from want, and she said she would certainly make a communication the moment she found it necessary; but the conduct of the immediate neighbourhood superseded the necessity of any exertion whatever in behalf of those people during those eighteen months, at the end of which we were called upon to take part in an easy subscription for the expenses of the funeral."

We have now obtained a view of the field of work which lies before the servants of the poor, and have observed the methods of its cultivation. This is a favourite metaphor, constantly appearing in the words and phrases of our author, which have a certain charm in their peculiarity. "The hedges and land-

marks of property" are traced out first. "What we most desiderate in an agent of charity is to have one with the taste and the inclinations of a thorough localist—one who rejoices in a home-walk." He is to enter on the possession of a "little domain" carved out of the whole district, "on which each labours unseen by the general eye." Here he will occupy "a chosen field," and "rejoice in putting forth his immediate hand on the work of reclaiming it from that neglected waste of ignorance and improvidence by which it is surrounded." It is "a territory" in which "he will feel a kind of property in the families." It is a "select and appropriate vineyard," where the cultivator is raising a home-grown crop of native worth, instead of relying on imported goods. Here let him "expatiate," and find pleasure in "the prosperous management of human nature." Here let him "pervade his locality," and "in the privacies of domestic life lay a deep foundation of peace and righteousness."

"It is a very great mistake to think that any other peculiar power is necessary for such an operation than peculiar painstaking. It is not with rare and extraordinary talent conferred upon a few, but with habits and principles which may be cultivated by all, that are linked our best securities for the reformation of the world. This is a work which will mainly be done with every-day instruments operating upon every-day materials." We seek then to engage

the charitable worker "with the near and practicable realities which lie within his reach. His best contribution to the interest of the world is to do the humble and practicable task which his hand findeth to do, and to do it with all his might, till he has finished it off. A single obscure street, with its few divergent lanes, may form the length and the breadth of his enterprise; but far better that he, with such means and such associates as are within his reach, should do this thoroughly, than that, merging himself in some wider association, he should vainly attempt in the gross that which never can be overtaken but in humble and laborious detail. Let him not think that the region which lies beyond the limits of his chosen and peculiar territory is to wither and be neglected because his presence is not there to fertilise it. Let him do his part, trusting at the same time that there are others around him who have zeal enough, and understanding enough, to do theirs. The example of a well-cultured portion of the territory . . . will diffuse itself by sympathy over the contiguous spaces."

"There is a very great difference, in respect of its practical influence, between a task that is indefinite and a task that is clearly seen to be overtakeable. The one has the effect to paralyse; the other, to quicken exertion. It serves most essentially to spirit on his undertaking, when, by every new movement,

one feels himself to be drawing sensibly nearer to the accomplishment of it."

"The individual who thus sits soberly down to a work that is commensurate with the real mediocrity of the human powers, will soon meet with much to reconcile him to the enterprise. . . . He loses a splendid deception, and he gets, in exchange for it, a solid reality, and a reality, too, which will at length grow and brighten into splendour. . . . We promise him a rich harvest of gratification in this precious walk of home charity—the comfort of knowing what he is about. . . . He will enjoy both the unity and the effectiveness of his doings."

Such is the fine conception formed by Chalmers of charity as a vital and inspiring force; such are the ways and means through which that force can work. Has he not set before us a noble service for the best energies of heart and mind and hand? Is not the object worthy of supreme devotion?

"We read in the New Testament parables, that each possessor of so many talents who turned them to full account was rewarded by the charge of as many cities. Certain it is, as we have already said, that there is a delight, one of the best and purest we can enjoy, in the prosperous management of human nature; and it looks as if this, one of the pleasures of the good here, were followed up by a larger enjoyment of the same in the realms of light

and blessedness hereafter. We know that there will be service there. And if they who turn others into righteousness shall shine as the stars in the firmament, we may guess from this their sightlier elevation, that there will be superintendence there—as if the little that was well done on earth were to be followed up by larger powers and opportunities of well-doing in that region on high where charity never faileth."

PART II.

SCENES FROM THE LIFE OF CHALMERS

"It is better to keep silence and really to be, than to talk and not to be. Teaching is good, if he that teaches also acts."—*St. Ignatius.*

CHAPTER VI.

EARLY EXPERIENCES.

"How best to help the slender store,
How mend the dwellings, of the poor;
How gain in life, as life advances,
Valour and Charity more and more."—*Tennyson.*

CHALMERS was no mere theorist. He valued a convincing theory, but only so far as it would stand the test of practical experience. His doctrine of Charity was severely criticised in his own day, and later students who cannot deny its worth and wisdom, are yet wont to suggest that something more is necessary to meet the actual conditions of the world in which we live. They will approve, and even admire, but they will also let the reader understand that Great Britain is not Utopia, and must always have its Poor Laws and its public schemes. We have heard it stated on a platform in Scotland that Dr. Chalmers was worthy of the highest admiration, that his work was splendid, but that it would not

do more than touch the fringe of the great problem of distress. If that be true, we may well ask where is the splendour in a work like this. Nay, what a dismal failure was the man's whole life. How utterly he must have misunderstood the factors and the right solution of the problem. Shall we pay honour to the perverse ingenuity which misleads the fancy with an idle show; to the architect who rears an edifice of paste-board, destined to collapse at the first encounter with a solid body? Such was emphatically not the work of Chalmers. He laid his foundation in the depths of human nature, deeper it may be than some minds can penetrate. He declared with fervent energy that he had no concern whatever with "Arcadian dreams." For every statement he was ready with proof and example. The policy which he pursued was expressly chosen to fit the circumstances of modern life. Not only so, but he worked it out himself in every detail, till he could point to the undeniable results. The present attempt to describe it from his own record has been undertaken from a firm conviction that he has set before us, not a mere work of art, but the true and practicable way of dealing with our social difficulties; and that, only so far as we approach his methods, can we hope for progress to a better state of things.

In the succeeding chapters our special aim will be to connect the principles of Chalmers with his

practical experience, and to see the workman at his work. Full space will be given to the great example of St. John's Parish, which must always remain a standing proof of the "Sufficiency of the Parochial System without a Poor-rate." To students of his social work this will stand forth as his most enduring monument. But we must remember that it was only one complete and striking episode in the course of "a life devoted to the public good." Other scenes will be selected for the illustration of our subject; and by presenting them in the order of time, we may hope to convey a fair impression of the career of Chalmers from the point of view that has been chosen. There is a sacrifice, no doubt, involved in the attempt to separate certain pages from the record of a life. We cannot thus do justice to the character of the man, or to the part which he played on a large stage adorned with varied incidents. For all this the reader must be referred to other books. But the imperfect picture here displayed may serve at least to concentrate our observation on scenes which have been too little noticed.

THE VILLAGE OF KILMANY.

Chalmers began with rural life in small communities. It appears that his attention was first drawn to the subject of poor relief in 1802 when he acted for some months as assistant to the minister

of Cavers, residing at Roberton and then at the small manufacturing town of Hawick. The three places are near together in Roxburghshire on the English border, where the Poor Law had been established for many years.

Moving thence in the next year to a parish of his own at Kilmany, where there was no poor-rate, he was struck by the contrast between the two systems in their effect on the character and welfare of the people. He observed how the former caused an increase of distress and expenditure, while it cut off the supplies of voluntary help.

The removal of his brother-in-law to Kingbrompton in Somerset furnished another instance for comparison. The number of people in this parish was exactly the same as at Kilmany, but its poor relief amounted to £1260 per annum instead of something less than £20.

For the next twelve years he enjoyed a long acquaintance with the old Scottish system unadulterated by any artificial mixtures, and the account which he gives of it in his evidence before the Parliamentary Committee will be instructive to those who are placed in any similar locality. Kilmany was a small agricultural village lying in a valley among the hills of Fifeshire, six miles south of Dundee, from which it is separated by the Firth of Tay. The population was 787, and the Church expenditure was £24

derived from the collections at the services, and the interest on a capital of £200. In a letter to his brother-in-law we read that "A further extension of this small fund to thirty pounds a year, by the introduction of the ladle, will be brought about next year; and even this I think scarcely desirable—not that I could not get poverty enough in the parish to absorb it, but that, let you extend this fund as much as you please, the poverty will extend along with it, so as to press as hard upon the supplies as ever. And if ever they come to be augmented to such a degree as to be counted upon by the lower orders, there is an end to that industry and virtuous independence which have so long formed the honourable distinction of our Scottish peasantry."

Out of this small sum £12 was given for some years to a single case, and payments were also made for certain church purposes. Practically, therefore, it may be said that there was no public relief in Kilmany. "The heritors sometimes offered me a supplemental voluntary sum, but I always disliked it; I said that the effect of this, if known to the parish, would be to excite a great deal more expectation than it could gratify, and I found the parish kept in a more wholesome state by the rich giving what they gave privately, and without coming ostensibly through the known and public organisation of the kirk-session; so that I always discountenanced

the tendency on the part of the heritors, who were abundantly liberal, to augment our regular session fund by any extraordinary contributions."

The condition of the poor was one of "decent comfort"—it was a "remarkably good economical condition"—throughout this period, because their "habits and expectations were accommodated to a state of things where a compulsory provision was unknown. . . . I think the excellence of our system, when compared with that of England, is altogether of a negative kind. Our parochial charity, from the extreme moderation of its allowances, does not seduce our people from a due dependence on themselves or to a neglect of their relative obligations." "Then," ask the Committee, "you attribute the state of this parish rather to your laying aside all interference, than to any positive and affirmative acts?—Decidedly so. I look upon a compulsory provision to be that which acts as a disturbing force upon certain principles and feelings, which, if left to their own undisturbed exercise, would do more for the prevention and alleviation of poverty, than can be done by any legal or artificial system whatever." And of this he gives an illustration: "I would state, as a kind of characteristic specimen of our Scottish peasantry, that I have at times offered a poor person five shillings as from the Session, and that it has been firmly yet gratefully refused; they said they were very

much obliged to me, but they had not just come to that yet, and that they could make a fend; by which they meant they could make a shift. The feeling of reluctance to public charity is very strong, and forms one of our greatest moral defences against the extension of pauperism in Scotland."

The Committee proceed to question him on special points in regard to which they might expect to find a deficiency among the poor.

"During those twelve years, were there any peculiar visitations of distress or sickness, or any commercial vicissitudes, which affected the population of this parish?—There was one instance of low wages, and I remember the heritors then came forth with an offer, which I gave way to for once, of about £50, which was distributed over and above the Sessional income. I had a feeling that it really was not necessary; I did not think the parish by any means required it; that is to say, I would much rather have preferred that they would, without the excitement of any great expectation in the parish, have distributed the sum of £50 in a private and unseen way."

What became of the aged poor?—"There is not a more familiar spectacle in our cottages, than the grandfather harboured for life by his own married children, and remaining with them for years, the honoured inmate of the family. In fact I have no

recollection of a single instance, and I am sure it would have been branded as the most monstrous and most unnatural of all things, of the desertion of relatives by relatives."

Were there no cases of affliction?—"I have a recollection of one insane person who, perhaps for a year, or a year and a half, was placed in the Dundee Asylum."

Was there enough provision for the sick?—"I am not sensible of there having been any deficiency at all. . . . They find, in the first place, a ready and great resource in the aid of their neighbours and friends; then the country surgeons are, in general, very moderate in their charges upon the poor. There is a strong habit of mutual kindness in cases of sickness, perhaps too much so; for, on these occasions, they are apt to overcharge each other with attentions."

There was one evil influence at work a few miles off. Men who would never have come upon the Church fund in their own village would sometimes go and live in pauperised Dundee. There they would soon become recipients of relief, and thence they would return with a very different spirit. "We will venture to say that one of the most powerful checks to pauperism, in a small parish, is the personal acquaintance which the members of every distinct vicinity in that parish have with each other. . . .

The exposure of one's degradation in the eyes of his fellow-men is at all times painful; but the pain is inconceivably heightened when this takes place in the sight of those with whom for years we have been in terms of familiar converse, among whom we have maintained, down to the present period of our history, the standing of an equal estimation, with whom we are every day in the habit of exchanging the notices and the civilities of good neighbourhood, and before whom, therefore, it may be quite unsufferable to make a visible descent amongst the wretched dependants upon the charity of the parish. We know not a single antipathy of more powerful and practical operation than this. . . . When a family moves from one parish to another, they get beyond the sphere of that moral control, . . . they have left all those restraints and delicacies, which grew stronger every year, by all the habits and all the recollections of a prolonged association. There is not a more frequent complaint among the administrators of parochial charity than the trouble and encroachments to which they are exposed from the rapacity of new-comers. There is not a more frequent topic of exultation than the superior delicacy and tone of character which obtain among the original inhabitants."

The British and Foreign Bible Society was started in 1812; and Chalmers borrowed from it an idea for the encouragement of thrift.—"I instituted a Society,

which was supported by the general population, at the expense of one penny a week each, for the support of religious and philanthropic objects. I conceive that this had a most wholesome influence upon their economic condition, because it raised them all to the high state and character of givers, and in that way it widened their moral distance from the condition of receivers." This, he says, "may look like rather a subtle influence, but I hold it to be of substantial operation. . . . I think that by the institution of that Society I raised and strengthened the barrier in the way of their descent to a state of pauperism." He adds that in the unassessed parishes the practice of contributing to the Sunday collection was almost universal.

There were no Benefit Societies within reach of the inhabitants for insurance against illness; and for some reason they have never flourished in Scotland as in the south. But "had I been as much acquainted with Savings Banks then as I am now, I should certainly have instituted one." In the absence of these aids to thrift, the favourite form of provision for the future was a sound investment. "I would say, it is very usual for them to have a good stock of furniture, or a cow." It was here too that he had personal experience of the custom of the "plenishing" or "providing" before marriage which has already been described.

So prospered the little country parish under the ministry of Chalmers, and for many more years under his successor. He continued to pay it occasional visits, but thirteen years after leaving it, he says, "the pauperism is so insignificant a part of its concerns, that it has never once been a topic of conversation between me and its present minister."

The cause of this prosperity was not to be found in the mere mechanism of the parish system, but in the habits which had room to grow where it prevailed. "This mechanism must have its springs; nor do they lie so undiscoverably deep in the constitution of our nature, that they cannot be brought out to the inspection of the curious, so as to disclose to them the mystery of its movements. Some of them, indeed, are so obvious that they will not require to be laboriously insisted on. And, among the foremost of these, who can fail to recognise the almost total withdrawment of that prospective security as to a maintenance from external sources, which must have the effect of tempting many an English labourer to such thriftlessness and improvidence, as are sure to hasten him on to the condition of pauperism? In many a Scottish parish, the whole sum expended on the poor would not suffice for the complete subsistence of one family. In such a case, every family *must* look to itself: and if they who are at the head of it do not always amass a competency to meet the

wants of old age, they do, in fact, look to their children.

"And if it be true that interest and necessity are the powerful agents for giving a practical establishment to many of the virtues; if this be the charm which, in the commercial world, upholds the members of it in the exercise of faith and honour and punctuality—then, in this more unobserved world of a country parish, we may rest assured that the very same charm will bind the great bulk of its inhabitants to such practices and habits as are most obviously indispensable for the safety or the maintenance of its members. If it hold true of human nature, that every quality is valued and held in reverence in proportion to the need for it; how powerfully, in such a state of things, will this principle invest the support and the shelter of parents with all the claims of an indispensable obligation! What a monstrous deformity will it impart to the act of abandoning them! And hence it is, that we are so often called upon to observe, under an economy like this, the honourable workings of what may be termed the epidemic virtue of every neighbourhood where such an economy is instituted—the aged reposing with comfort and respect in the houses of their children—sitting at their allotted place of distinction by the evening fire—returning this filial piety by such little acts of helpfulness as their feebleness can

still administer;—in a word, instead of being surrounded by the dreariness, and the coldness, and the alienations of a Poor's-house, spending the winter of their days amongst homebred feelings and homebred enjoyments—and at length carried to their graves by the arms of descendants who, out of their own hard and honest earnings, shielded the parents who gave them birth from a degradation they would have blushed to endure; and, keeping them off from the parish to the very last, so bore up the termination of their career as to sustain the dignity of its character throughout, and nobly to close its description, as a career of unbroken and unsullied independence.

"These are the grand moral struggles which resolve this mystery—and by which, while the temptation to give them up is only kept at a distance from us, there would be a secure and everlasting barrier against the progress of pauperism in our Scottish parishes."

And then he asks, "which is nobler—to struggle unseen with the difficulties of your situation, or to lay open your house and your circumstances to the scowl of an official inquisitor? Or if these difficulties are like to overmatch you—whether it would not come home to your feelings in the form of a kindlier application, that the helping hand of a secret and invisible friend was stretched forth to relieve you, than that your degradation should be obtruded upon the face of day, or be indelibly engraven in the

registers of a public institution? Which of the two would be the more cheering to your family—the visit of an affectionate neighbour, who knows your misfortunes and your worth, and is ready to shower upon you the tenderness of his silent ministrations—or that you should swell the number of applicants who troop around Public Benevolence as she sits on her elevated chair, and deals out her weekly allowances with all the point and rigour of an attorney? These, however, are the mortifications which every instituted provision for the poor is sure to bring along with it—and that too without any abatement of the ills of poverty, but with a sore and increasing aggravation of them."

THE TRON[1] CHURCH, GLASGOW.

Of his next parish he was minister from 1815 to 1819, a period equal to that which he afterwards spent in St. John's. But the conditions were altogether different. He had here to face the problem of State-relief which in the larger towns of Scotland was being dovetailed into the old parochial arrangements. A short description will explain the joint system which prevailed at this time in Glasgow.

The supplies raised by collection at all the Churches were thrown into a single fund entrusted to *the General Session*, consisting of all the clergy and elders of the eight parishes. By them the fund was re-

[1] A Tron is a weighing machine.

distributed to the several parishes according to the needs of each. The parishes were divided into proportions, each under an elder, who received the applications in the first instance and decided whether they should be referred to the voluntary or legal source of relief. The fund was called the Sessional Fund; and the poor assisted by it were known as the Sessional Poor. This was the voluntary part of the system.

The proceeds of assessment were in the hands of another body, called *the Town Hospital*, which provided indoor and outdoor relief for the partial or entire assistance of cases sent up to it by the General Session as requiring more help than the latter could afford. These were known as the Town Hospital poor.

Apart from the general objections which may be brought against all public relief, there were special evils in this ill-advised arrangement. The attempt to equalise the resources of poor and rich districts by means of the General Session is very much like the Common Poor Fund administered in London at the present day; it is worthy of special consideration, in view of the suggestions that are often made for a further extension of the same device. Chalmers condemned it utterly. "If we wish to see in the business of a Kirk-Session, somewhat of the alertness and quick-sightedness, and patient attention, where-

with an individual in private life looks after the business of his private affairs, we must throw it upon its own resources. . . . It is not in human nature that any one corporation can be so tender of the funds of another, as it would be of its own. . . . To leave to each Session the right of sitting in judgment over the cases of its own parochial applicants, after having wrested from it its own peculiar revenue, and then to deal forth upon it from a joint stock such supplies of money as it may require for its expenditure, is the most likely arrangement that could have been devised for establishing in each parish a most lax, and careless, and improvident administration. . . . The effect is unavoidable. A Kirk-Session will be at no pains to augment that local revenue which it is not permitted to appropriate; and it will be at as little pains to husband that general revenue in which it has only a small fractional concern." The competition between the parishes will not be "which shall best square its own separate expenditure by its own separate resources," but "which shall draw most from the common stock." Under this system "the new cases will pour in every month with the most pernicious facility, . . . and against this the scrutinies of every year that take place under the general management, will be found to raise a most vain and impotent barrier."

In another way very great evil arose from the

combination of Church and State relief. No more ingenious plan could have been devised for the manufacture of pauperism. For behind the General Session stood the Town Hospital, a body still further removed from local control, with resources apparently unlimited, and to which "the main host of that pauperism which made good its entry on the compulsory fund" was conducted by an easy process. "Each Session might have been regarded as having two doors—one of them a door of admittance from the population who stand at the margin of pauperism; and another of them a door of egress to the Town Hospital, through which the occupiers of the outer court made their way to the inner temple. The Sessions, in fact, were the feeders or conductors by which the Town Hospital received its pauperism that, after lingering a while on this path of conveyance, was impelled onward to the farther extremity, and was at length thrust into the bosom of the wealthier institution by the pressure that constantly accumulated behind it. It will be seen at once how much this economy of things tended to relax still more all the Sessional administrations of the city; and with what facility the stream of pauperism would be admitted at the one end, where so ready and abundant a discharge was provided for it at the other. We know not how it was possible to devise a more likely arrangement for lulling the vigilance of those who stood at the

outposts of pauperism—and that, too, at a point where their firm and strenuous guardianship was of greatest importance; even at the point where the first demonstrations towards public charity were made on the part of the people, and where their incipient tendencies to this new state, if judiciously while tenderly dealt with, might have been so easily repressed. To station one body of men at the entrance of pauperism, and burden them only with the lighter expenses of its outset, from which they have the sure prospect of being relieved by another body of men, who stand charged both with the trouble and expense of its full and finished maturity—there could scarcely have been set a-going a more mischievous process of acceleration towards all the miseries and corruptions which are attendant on the overgrown charity of England. In some recent years the pauperism of Glasgow has about trebled the amount of what it stood at in 1803."

Under these circumstances it was impossible for Chalmers to carry out his ideas in the Tron Parish. The only course open to him was "to break loose from the control, and the controversy, and the inextricable confusion which attached to such a piece of ponderous and overgrown mechanism, to retire from it into his own snug and separate corner, whereon he could draw near to the subjects of his own petty administration."

But even here the enemy pursued him in another shape, and a further retreat was necessary. "I disliked very much the condition of the parish at the outset of my connexion with it, and withdrew altogether from any share in the management of its pauperism; I felt it my duty to do so. In the eyes of the population the minister stood connected, not merely with the administration of this compulsory fund, but with the administration of a great many such charities as we call mortifications in Scotland, which are endowments for indigence, left by benevolent citizens, and who generally constitute the clergy the trustees."—One of these was Miller's Mortification, of which he playfully remarks, "I am sure it produced great mortification to me"—and he continues, "Among the earliest movements I made through the families, I was very much surprised at the unexpected cordiality of my welcome, the people thronging about me, and requesting me to enter their houses. I remember I could scarcely make my way to the bottom of a close in the Saltmarket, I was so exceedingly thronged by the people; but I soon perceived that this was in consequence of my imagined influence in the distribution of these charities; and I certainly did feel a very great recoil, for it was so different from the principle upon which I had been received with cordiality in my country parish, where the topic of their temporal

necessities was scarcely ever mentioned: I therefore resolved to dissever myself from the administration of these charities altogether. I soon made the people understand that I only dealt in one article, that of Christian instruction; and that, if they chose to receive me upon this footing, I should be glad to visit them occasionally. I can vouch for it that the cordiality of the people was not only enhanced but very much refined in its principle after this became the general understanding: so that of the ten thousand entries which I have made at different times into the houses of the poor in Glasgow, I cannot recollect half a dozen instances in which I was not received with welcome. I thus stood aloof during those four years from the administration of all those charities."

This was the time when Chalmers rose to the height of his fame as a preacher. His talents had been recognised before; they now became widely known through the important position which he held in Glasgow, and in consequence of a visit which he paid to London in 1817. He was a young man to be unanimously chosen a Doctor of Divinity, for his celebrated Astronomical Discourses were delivered at the age of thirty-six; but his appearance in the pulpit attracted crowds of enthusiastic listeners, and leading statesmen, like Canning, admitted his superior eloquence. He did not care for popularity. It was

a hindrance to his intercourse with the poor because it filled his church with wealthy people. He could even speak with scorn of "the hosannahs of a drivelling generation." When the applause was loudest, a friend one day met him in a state of despondency, declaring that he had not done right in leaving his country parish; and the feeling could only be dispelled by giving him the particulars of a case in which his help had been of service.

It was not unnatural that a man of vehement temper and singular ability, who had set his mind on practical work of a definite kind, should have been troubled by the distractions of a city life. Earnest and active workers in East London have told us that a parish clergyman can hardly be better employed than in setting an example of probity and diligence in the conduct of public business; and that he can do much to promote the welfare of the people by playing the part of a good citizen on a vestry or other public board. It is certain also that he may exert a healthy influence upon the upper classes, if he is able to share in their pursuits and entertainments. We may, therefore, be disposed to wonder that, in his Glasgow ministry, Chalmers should have felt so little interest in the committees for various useful purposes, at which his presence was desired, or the ceremonies and civilities in which he was expected to take part. But at this time he

had resolved to concentrate his energies on the parish and the poor. It was his aim to work among the people, and to devote all his leisure to the study of the Christian religion and its application to the problems of modern social life. All else was vanity and vexation of spirit. He would accept no hospitality though the refusal might give offence. He denounced the imposition of secular duties upon the clergy. More than once he thundered from his pulpit against these encroachments on his proper work; and in writing to an old friend, he said, "I am gradually separating myself from all this trash."

Amongst other interruptions we may refer to one which few clergymen can hope to escape—the appeal to their sympathy by unknown beggars and impostors. Unlike most writers on charity, Chalmers has hardly anything to say about mendicity. He regards it as a very pardonable offence, against which much mistaken zeal has been wasted. He even defends it on the ground that "those who are destitute must be relieved somehow, and must have some way of making their wants known." By ancient regulations the beggar, if otherwise respectable, was licensed to ply his trade within his own locality. In later times the practice came to be regarded as a nuisance, and this change of feeling was one of the chief causes of the introduction of the Poor

Law. "It should always be kept in mind that the great and original purpose for which this vicious system was instituted, was the suppression of vagrancy." The remedy, in his opinion, was far worse than the disease; "and we do confess that, rather than have such a system, we would sit down under mendicity in its very worst form." But he proceeds to show that there is no reason why society should be burdened in either way. The vice is one to be combated by indirect means and will die out wherever it is met by careful investigation under a proper local system. The vagrant will not frequent such places, and as for the resident beggar, he will soon be traced to his abode and may be helped into a better course of life. It was only when the pretence of religion became a cloak for begging that Chalmers was moved to indignation. The following story belongs to this period of his life.

"While Dr. Chalmers was very busily engaged one forenoon in his study, a man entered, who at once propitiated him under the provocation of an unexpected interruption, by telling him that he called under great distress of mind. "Sit down, sir; be good enough to be seated," said Dr. Chalmers, turning eagerly and full of interest from his writing-table. The visitor explained to him that he was troubled with doubts about the divine origin of the Christian religion; and being kindly questioned as to what these

were, he gave among others what is said in the Bible about Melchisedek being without father and without mother, etc. Patiently and anxiously Dr. Chalmers sought to clear away each successive difficulty as it was stated. Expressing himself as if greatly relieved in mind, and imagining that he had gained his end—"Doctor," said the visitor, "I am in great want of a little money at present, and perhaps you could help me in that way." At once the object of his visit was seen. A perfect tornado of indignation burst upon the deceiver, driving him in very quick retreat from the study to the street door, these words escaping among others—"Not a penny, sir! Not a penny! It's too bad! it's too bad! And to haul in your hypocrisy upon the shoulders of Melchisedek!"

While the Tron Parish offered no fair field for a contest with pauperism, it was also ill-adapted to be the scene of a demonstration of the means whereby a town could be made to resemble a country village.

The first step which Chalmers took was to attempt the personal visitation of every family, which in a population of nearly 12,000 proved to be "a very stupendous work." The visits were extremely short, but he did succeed in thus completing a survey of the district from which much valuable information was derived.

His next endeavour was to attach a new set of

laymen to the Church, by conferring the title of "elders" on the men of a younger generation; he hoped in this way to introduce an element of greater energy into the work, and to divide the mass of it amongst a number of efficient helpers. This also proved a failure for the time. There had been no systematic arrangement in the parish when he assumed the charge of it. The Church of Scotland was only beginning to awaken from a long slumber; and his efforts to arouse it to new life met at first with a cold reception.

In one direction, however, a rapid and vigorous advance was made, and an experiment was set on foot which led to great results in the future. Sabbath schools were already in existence; but it was at this time that Chalmers invented and establised a number of *local* Sabbath schools, on "the aggressive principle," each master having one small district out of forty, whence it was his business to attract all the children. In the *Essay on Statistics* it is thus described:—"So far back as 1816 I made a single parish the subject of no less than forty distinct and independent operations—each carried forward in a small and separate district of its own. A parish of 11,000 people was broken up into a congeries of Sabbath schools on the local principle—the efficacy of which altogether turns on the difference between seeking and being sought after. To every teacher were assigned about

fifty contiguous households; and his business was to go round and solicit the attendance of the children. When left to themselves, as they were under the general system, I am confident that not more than a hundred from the whole parish attended Sabbath schools. Under the aggressive operations which we had instituted, the yield amounted to fully 1200 of our juvenile population. . . . We see no difference between the case of Sabbath evening schools for the young, and the case of churches which are Sabbath-day schools for the community at large, or people of all ages; and it is our conviction, more and more riveted by the observations of every year, that an operation at once territorial and aggressive forms the only tactics by which to reclaim *en masse* or to work with aught like general and sensible effect on the aggregates of a city population."

The principle thus successfully applied to a single set of classes was put in force in relation to all the schooling at St. John's and again in the West Port at Edinburgh; and the very same principle, when brought to bear upon the "people of all ages" by the elders and deacons who worked under Chalmers, became the basis of his whole system of parochial administration.

Such are a few special features of the Tron Parish which come within the scope of our inquiry. The details of this period may be filled in from the pages

of Mrs. Oliphant, a writer who has well described the life and character of Chalmers, though she has failed to appreciate the merits of his way of dealing with the poor. It was in this parish that he first explored the mysteries and grappled with the difficulties of city life; and it was from this experience that he derived the doctrines and the policy to which he ever afterwards adhered. If we read the full record of his Glasgow ministry, we shall be amazed by the amount of public and private work which he performed, often under circumstances of great difficulty; we shall catch many points of interest which throw light upon the man himself and the secret of his influence on other men; and we shall notice more particularly how he delighted to live and work among the working people, how keenly and thoroughly he entered into their pursuits and interests, so that he became qualified to speak with the authority of an intimate personal knowledge on all that concerned the welfare of the poor.

CHAPTER VII.

THE PAROCHIAL SYSTEM OF ST. JOHN'S.

"Now first we stand and understand,
And sunder false from true,
And handle boldly with the hand,
And see and shape and do.

And had some prophet spoken true
Of all we shall achieve,
The wonders were so wildly new,
That no man would believe."—*Mechanophilus.*

THE LOCAL CONDITIONS.

In 1819 the new parish of St. John's was formed, and Dr. Chalmers was appointed its first minister. Here he had the prospect of a clear field on which to apply his stores of experience and his great ability to the working out of the local system.

His first endeavour was to free himself from the trammels of municipal interference and "to obtain a separate and independent management of the poor." It required all his energy and all the public confidence which he commanded, to gain such a measure of

freedom as would enable him to put his scheme in operation. "For the accomplishment of this I had to obtain the consent, and what greatly enhances the difficulty, the *corporate* consent of so many and such different parties. I had the good fortune, from a rare conjunction of circumstances, to secure at the outset of my connection with St. John's Parish, the countenance of the magistrates for the time being on our proposed experiment. But, over and above this, I had to deal with an adverse General Session, and an adverse Town Hospital, and if not an adverse Presbytery, what was just as troublesome, some adverse members of it who summoned me to a public defence of my enterprise at the bar of their inferior church judicatory, and then carried the cause by appeal to the General Assembly, or supreme ecclesiastical court, where I had also to appear, and from whom, but not till after much and strenuous argumentation, I obtained the privilege of being let alone."

He compares his position at this time to that of Sir Isaac Newton attempting to resolve the problem of three bodies. But, he says, "I had to compute my way among the mutual attractions, or rather repulsions, of no less than four bodies." And so, "when we had to steer our course under the beck of so many great unwieldy corporations, which appeared to frown from their respective orbits upon us and upon one another, I must confess that . . . the

enterprise of assimilating a town to a country parish often looked to me a very hopeless speculation.

"The legal and political difficulties that stood in the way of the arrangement were not to be told; they formed, in truth, all the difficulties of the problem, for after these were overcome the natural difficulties turned out to be so many bugbears, and quite disappeared." When once the system was established, it stood as a barrier between the disease and that which I hold to be the aliment of the disease, the compulsory fund, when by the pure *vis medicatrix* of the body politic, the pauperism subsided of itself."

Chalmers asked for three conditions, which he set forth in a letter to the Lord Provost—a letter remarkable for the perfect confidence which it shows in the certainty of success. At a time when everyone prophesied a speedy failure for want of funds, he carefully stipulated for leave to devote his anticipated surplus to education instead of relief. And again, while others held that his sole chance would lie in driving his poor into the neighbouring parishes, he only begged to be saved from the intrusion of theirs. He asked for a "law of residence. . . . I am quite willing that every other parish shall have protection by this law from the ingress of my poor, in return for the protection of my parish from the ingress of theirs." This was never granted. The third concession which he desired was that the parish should

share in any general funds that might be raised to meet exceptional distress. "But this," he says, "we ourselves forebore—for in 1820, under one of the most trying visitations which Glasgow ever experienced, when an immense central soup-kitchen was set up for the whole city, we set up a miniature soup-kitchen for our own people; and if besides this extraordinary supply any of the money raised by general subscription, and that for general distribution, reached any of the families in St. John's—it must have been in a few rare instances which escaped the vigilance of our own deacons, intent as we all were on weathering even this most adverse crisis in our history by independent efforts of our own." [1]

The new parish had a little over 10,000 inhabitants. It was "the poorest and most populous in Glasgow." Its character was "exclusively manufacturing, with the exception of shopkeepers, and a few of the upper classes, amounting to about a dozen families." In another passage he describes it as "more especially abounding in that class of operatives who are most affected by the reverses and difficulties to which every manufacturing place is liable. And beside the weavers, there is a very large body of labourers, whose employment fluctuates with the season, and who are often forced to suspend work for many days at a time." The "plebeian" nature of the district was further shown by

[1] For the fate of this soup-kitchen see above, page 191.

the proportion of servants to the whole population, which was about 1 in 34; and even this estimate included errand-boys, so that the number of household servants was very small; "indeed, there are very few of our families that have one."

"Under the average and ordinary style of management for one-tenth of the population of Glasgow, in the average circumstances of that population, the whole expense of its pauperism should be from twelve to fourteen hundred pounds yearly." This estimate should be noted in comparison with the figures which we will now set forth.

FINANCE OF THE SYSTEM.

Many have failed to appreciate the work accomplished by Chalmers at St. John's for the want of a correct apprehension of the nature and amount of the funds at his disposal, and the way in which he made use of them. A clear statement on this point will explain much that follows.

In the first place it should be noticed that the Town Hospital (or Poor Law authority) continued for a time to support the poor already on its books, the original undertaking being that no new cases should be sent to it. Under this arrangement it was clear that in a certain number of years this form of relief would come to an end. "The old pauperism, then on the Town Hospital, behoved

to die away," and after that the parish would be quite independent of the rates.

Next, as to the resources within the parish itself. The whole available income was derived from the Church collections. Here Chalmers drew a line of demarcation which must be carefully observed.

1. *The Day or General Collection.* It was calculated from the experience of the Tron and other districts that the proceeds of the ordinary services would amount to £400 a year. This money was placed in the hands of the elders, together with the duty of providing for the "Sessional poor," who were already in receipt of relief from the Church Funds when the new system was commenced. The amount required at this time for the Sessional poor was £225, leaving an estimated balance of £175 in the hands of the elders. No new relief might be granted by them. As in the case of the Town Hospital, the claimants on this fund "behoved to die away," and then the whole of it would be applicable to other purposes than relief. In the meantime there was no need of hurry. "It was not by an act of dismissal even though warranted by a fair scrutiny, that we sought to get rid of the old pauperism. We cared not though in every case, he who had been already admitted upon its roll should be seen to his grave in the full sufficiency of his present allowance. . . . It was quite enough that while at one end the old

pauperism was melting gradually away, the whole success of the experiment hinged on the rate at which the new pauperism was admitted at the other end." As yet we have seen no means of provision for this new pauperism.

2. *The Evening Collection.* It was always the wish of Chalmers to draw his congregation as far as possible from the residents in the district. It was also his intention to deal with the distress of the parish by the efforts and offerings of its own poor. But a difficulty arose from his eminence and popularity as a preacher; he could not exclude from the ordinary services those who were attracted from beyond the boundary. He contrived, however, to attain his object by the institution of an evening service which was open only to the working classes. The collection at this service amounted to £80 a year, which was "made up of the humble halfpence gathered at the church doors from a poor parochial congregation, altogether distinct from the wealthier congregation which assembled through the day from all parts of the town." It was entrusted to the deacons, together with the duty of attending to all applications for relief. The essential point to bear in mind is that this £80 was the only fund available for that purpose.

"It will at once be seen that the essence of the problem lay in the treatment of these new cases;

and that if they could be met from our evening collection, then might they have been met in other parishes from the produce of their day collections, in all instances superior to the one wherewith our deacons were intrusted."

There was another reason for this policy. Chalmers knew the weakness of human nature. He knew that the very existence of a relief fund causes applications, and that the best deacons were likely to be demoralised if they had access to so large a sum as £400 a year. They would be sure to make grants out of the money in hand, instead of drawing out the resources of the poor. "The truth is, that the indefinite power of raising money has often as bad an effect on the dispensers, by slackening their management, as it has on the recipients, by corrupting them into habits of dependence. . . . Wherever there is a large disposable fund for the expenses of pauperism, a certain relaxation will gently and imperceptibly insinuate itself into the management. It was to secure an alert administration at the outset that the deacons were restricted to their very humble revenue. . . . We were fearful of a laxer and less careful management even from them, had the whole collection been placed at their disposal . . . and we did apprehend that with a large sum in their hands they would not have been so strenuous in their inquiries, or gone so busily in quest of other and previous expedients for

the relief of the cases before them, as when actuated by the stimulating consideration of the little they had to bestow." This is a point well worthy of the consideration of Charitable Societies.

The results of the system were immediate and striking. As early as 1822 he says, "for two years and a half we have, with the evening collection alone, rightly met all the new cases, and rightly provided for them, and though its annual amount be £80 only, yet we have a surplus on hand of £65; and judging of the future from the past, and after having traversed the dreariest and most distressful period that ever occurred in the history of Glasgow, we all feel most proudly confident that ere the new pauperism shall have overtaken the evening collection, the old pauperism shall have disappeared—or, in other words, that the whole public charity of our plebeian district shall be defrayed, to the last shilling of it, by plebeian offerings."

On the same occasion, he says, "with my present day collection I am positively doing nothing but clearing away the rubbish of the old system." The day collection also had accumulated a surplus of which he "stood in dread," and it was a question of some anxiety where to find "a safe and salutary absorbent" for it. Already £100 from this source went to the salaries of schoolmasters, and Chalmers was in favour of devoting all the money saved from

relief to the purpose of education. But he was not distinctly authorised to spend it in this way, and to most of his colleagues another plan seemed more inviting. "In less than two years we found ourselves able to extend our original offer to the Town Hospital—so that, additionally to the relief of sending them no more new cases, we were able to propose the further relief of taking off from the fund by assessments every old case that could be traced to the parish of St. John's." For his own part, Chalmers doubted the wisdom of this course. He feared that "the exhibition of any sudden or marvellous achievement would serve to confirm the impression that was already too much abroad, as if the process that we were engaged in was, on the whole, of such a Quixotic and extraordinary character as to distance all imitation. . . . We wanted to sustain the character of our enterprise as being that of a steady and slow-going operation, which might be copied in all the parishes." He gave way, however, finding that his friends were impatient to "strike an exterminating blow on the old compulsory pauperism of St. John's." The offer was made and accepted, and the old paupers were taken off the rates. Their number had fallen from 49 to 34, and their cost to £90 a year, most of them being cases of extreme old age.

On leaving the parish, he gives the following statement of account:—"The success of the system greatly

outstripped my own anticipations. I continued with them four years. The whole number of new paupers admitted during these four years was twenty: of which number those admitted on the ground of general indigence were thirteen, and their annual expense was £35; the number admitted on the ground of extraordinary and hopeless disease was two, and their annual expense was £14 16s.; the number admitted on the ground of that necessity which springs from crime was five, there being two illegitimate children and three families of runaway husbands, whose annual expense amounted to £19 10s. So that when I left St. John's the annual expenditure of the new pauperism that had been formed was £66 6s."

Even this small sum he regards as double the amount that should have been required. "Deduct certain cases of immorality which ought not to be provided for in this way, and the cases of lunacy or other institutional disease which ought to be provided for at the public expense; and the whole of our yearly charge for general indigence amounted to £32."

"Such a result," he continues, "might well be as astonishing as if no paupers had been taken on at all. And indeed it would have required but a small effort to have drawn a little more largely on our previous expedients, and so to have prevented even these thirteen from coming on the roll." He

mentions the case of one of them, to whom 5s. a month was granted, "which accounts for at least £3 of the £32." She was "an aged female of great Christian worth," and he expresses the hope that her many friends and neighbours may have been unaware of the grant, otherwise she must have lost more than she gained by receiving it.

RULES AND PRINCIPLES.

We have next to consider the plan on which the deacons worked:—"We divided the parish into twenty-five parts; and, having succeeded in obtaining as many deacons, we assigned one part to each—thus placing under his management towards fifty families, or at an average about 400 of a gross population. We constructed also a familiar or brief directory which we put into their hands." The procedure was as follows: "First, let it be a settled maxim that, while every case of want and suffering must be attended to, of all the expedients it shall come the last . . . to provide for it from the poor's money of the parish. This should in every instance of mere poverty be looked on as the *dernier ressort*—a sort of necessary evil, which one submits to because he cannot otherwise help it, and not till every right method has failed by which to anticipate and avoid it."

He next explains "what the shifts are which

ought to be tried ere the descent is made, or the name of the applicant goes down on the list of dependants on the public charity. . . . First, having ascertained a destitution, if possible to stimulate the industry of the applicant, and see what more he might earn. Second, to improve his economy, and see what the things are upon which he might save. Thirdly, to seek after his relatives, and see what they will give. Fourthly, to make the case known among neighbours, and see whether the necessity might not be got over by one joint effort of liberality; or even, whether there is not a willingness amongst them to keep off for an indefinite time the stigma of pauperism from one, who is so far a favourite throughout his little vicinity that hearts and hands may yet be open to him. It is not known how effectual these shifts might be made, how prolific of relief are these natural and spontaneous resources—all of which ought certainly to be attempted and drawn upon, ere the case shall be suffered to appear in court, or submitted to the board of parochial administrators. It should be the distinct aim of each deacon to provide for the wants of his district in a more excellent way, and so as to intercept, if he can, every application before it reaches the door of the parish vestry. That deacon, in fact, does his duty best who gives his court of deacons the least to do. Such ought to be the reigning principle,

the *esprit de corps*, among the members of the body. And what is better still, it were a possible, nay, an easy thing, for each deacon to awaken an *esprit de corps* akin to this among the families of his own district—insomuch that each might collectively feel it as their distinction and their glory, to have few or even no paupers within their borders."

Should the above shifts fail, the next subject of inquiry will be "whether he is a hearer in any dissenting place of worship, and whether its session will contribute to his relief. And if, after these previous inquiries, it be found that further relief is necessary, then there must be a strict ascertainment of his term of residence in Glasgow, and whether he be yet on the funds of the Town Hospital, or is obtaining relief from any other parish."

After these measures have been taken, "there still remains another expedient, . . . of which we should never wish to avail ourselves, save on the tried and found insufficiency of all the previous expedients," namely, "that his circumstances should be made known to one or more wealthy friends, though not of the parish, who, whether by a small and regular pension, or by a single gratuity, might interpose for the rescue of some struggling family. . . . And in the bulk of instances, this we affirm can be done with a facility that is quite marvellous." It will, however, seldom be required; "we should indeed

wonder if in any well-managed parish, after the full introduction and establishment of our system, half a dozen such examples of a resort to gentlemen for some slight pecuniary aid were required or called for in the course of a twelvemonth."

Supposing even this device to fail, and the case of the person in distress to be brought before the deacons' meeting, "*their* first step should be, if possible, to prevent the introduction of his name into their record, as forming one of the regular paupers on the roll. . . . The spirit that shrinks from such an exposure ought to be upheld as long as possible." They will therefore find it "good policy to consider whether the application may not be treated as a casualty to be provided for by a single donation, and recorded under the general head of casualties, without the name of the person who is relieved by it." Nay, there is yet one more chance for the applicant after this. It is possible that the deacon may have been mistaken. "He will receive the assistance of another deacon to complete and confirm his inquiries, by the next ordinary meeting thereafter, at which time the applicant, if they still think him a fit object, is brought before us, and received upon the fund at such a rate of allowance as, upon all the circumstances of the case, the meeting of deacons shall judge proper.

"Of course, pending these examinations, the deacon

is empowered to grant the same kind of discretionary aid that is customary in the other parishes."

We pause for a moment to note the contrast between the work of Chalmers and that of our charitable agencies at the present day. How carefully he considered the moral effect, how little he valued the material gift! What regard he felt for the self-respect of his people; what infinite pains he would take to preserve their independence, not from a poor-rate, not from a large public charity, but only from the little evening collection of the deacons which, after all, was made up of their own contributions. How many of our modern parishes are "well managed" according to the rule of Chalmers? How many of our modern clergy would attach such extreme importance to the virtue of self-reliance, when it is so easy to distribute clothes and food?

The only real difficulty in working on these lines was met with at the very beginning of the process. "It was known among the people that ours was to be some new and peculiar method for the management of our poor. With many, a better management was construed into a more liberal distribution. This in the first instance . . . subjected us to an excess of applications, which had each to be disposed of according to the principles of our system, but which speedily subsided when the system came to be understood. Ours was a strict, though in every case a friendly

investigation, the object of which was to ascertain all the previous means and resources of which we should avail ourselves, ere we drew on the public charity at all. All who were conscious of possessing such means simply ceased to apply; and the number of applications fell in a month or two to about one-fifth of the number made under the old system."

This was not the result of neglect, but of increased attention. "It was our perfect determination that every applicant of ours should be at least as well off as he would have been in any other parish of Glasgow, *had his circumstances there been as well known*, so that, surrounded though we were by hostile and vigilant observers, no case of scandalous allowance, or still less of scandalous neglect, was ever made out against us. The only distinction between us and our neighbours lay" in the more thorough scrutiny of the circumstances, so that, "very generally in the course of the investigation we came in sight of opportunities or openings," by which the need of public help was superseded.

Such a system of inquiry involves some labour at starting, but it very soon becomes an easy matter, because the natural forces work on the side of the inquirer. "The success of the enterprise, in fact, . . . hinges . . . on the number of applications that are forborne . . . We do not drive back the people, but the people keep back themselves." They soon

understand that "should they step forward they will be met by men who can give them an intelligent as well as a civil reception"; that "our object is not to devise new expedients of relief, but as much as in us lies, to keep them closely at their own expedients. . . . The very frankness with which this is announced, is liked" by them. "The parochial agency, in fact, have had little more to do than to hold out a face of intelligence to the people, on the subject of their necessities; and this has been followed up by an instantaneous slackening of the parochial demand. . . . When the people are not misled they do not move. . . . If they are not seduced from their own capabilities they silently abide by them, and every act of friendly intercourse on the part of any observant philanthropist, with the lower orders, will serve to satisfy him the more, how much our distance from the people has kept us in entire delusion regarding them; and led us, more particularly, to underrate both their own sufficiency for their own subsistence, and the noble spirit by which they are already actuated, or which, under a right system of attentions, can most speedily be infused into them. This has been the whole drift of our experience."

Thus the results of experiment were found to coincide with those of calculation. "The task may look insuperable in the gross, but its obstacles all vanish in the detail. . . . A trial is better than an

argument. We have often failed to convince the partisans of the old system by our reasonings; but we have succeeded, in more instances than one, by making deacons of them."

THE DEACONS AND THEIR WORK.

Reference has already been made in Chapter III. to the order of men employed by Chalmers for this work. "The office of a deacon, as described in the original formularies of our kirk, has long fallen into desuetude: and it may appear to some a grotesque and incongruous combination, when we propose to revive it in the persons of our modern city gentlemen, versant it may be in the philosophy and recent economics of our present day; and on whom we would fasten the name and the investiture of functionaries scarcely known in Scotland since the time of our remote grandfathers." Nevertheless he is persuaded that "the devices and discoveries of the present age, its savings banks, and parish libraries, and mechanic schools, will not be the less but tenfold more effective, when brought to bear on the population in the garb and with the authority of an old ecclesiastical institute."

As to the individuals who worked under him, "they were men of various fortune, some of them in respectable business, and others having little or nothing to spare. It was a most improving experience to observe how they severally sped." Two of the very poorest

districts were under a merchant's clerk and a journeyman to a house-wright, and in spite of the poverty there was almost no pauperism. He cannot say that the wealthier deacons were guilty of imprudence—"they were too well inoculated in the principles of our management"; but on the whole the districts under poor deacons were "in the more quiescent and satisfied state."

Most of the deacons were not residents in the parish. "I would have preferred their being so, but ours was the most plebeian parish in Glasgow, and there were very few of that class to whom I could have confided the administration of the poor's fund; but I found no difficulty in obtaining the requisite agency from other parts of the city." These men had accepted the principles of their leader, and believed "that in warding off the parochial charity, as much as in them lay, from the families under their care, they were warding off from them a very great mischief." Of their work he says with pride, "there never was more patient and persevering inquiry exercised by any set of men than was exercised at the outset by my deacons." Their influence was felt in many other ways. It led to a better attendance at the schools and sewing-classes; it "told on the comfort and cleanliness and whole interior economy of the houses"; the people were cheered in their difficulties and helped to overcome them. There was "a greater

contentment and a greater actual sufficiency than before."

On leaving the parish Chalmers sent a circular to the deacons containing nine questions, the object of which was to ascertain the amount of time and labour which they spent on their work, and to illustrate the nature of it. The replies to this circular are most instructive. We see the deacons in their districts, and hear their own account of their doings. We see the doctrines of their chief applied in practice and shown to fit the facts of life. "I am aware," says Chalmers, "of nothing more valuable in the annals of pauperism—nothing which comes nearer to the very essence and philosophy of the question, than the simple unvarnished statements of these eminently practical men, who had been engaged at close quarters with the subject for so many years. . . . Theirs is experience, and what alone is deserving of the name, experience charged with principle—truth at first hand." This will probably be the verdict of anyone who reads their evidence; and it ought to be read in full. There is something very impressive in the constant repetition of identical statements by the twenty-two men, writing quite independently of one another. The tone and style of their remarks are forcible and convincing. It is not without regret that we have sacrificed so much of the effect to the exigencies of space; but it may be hoped that enough

has been preserved to show the nature of the whole. The first five answers admit of easy condensation.

Question 1. The name of the "proportion."

Question 2. The population.—This we have seen to be about 400.

Question 3. How many persons are in receipt of relief from the deacons' fund?—*The average number is less than one*; ten of the proportions having none at all, and only four reporting more than one.

Question 4. How many applications are received, monthly or quarterly?—To bring the answers together we have to deal in fractions. After some calculation the average comes out at *one application and a quarter every three months, or five in the year.* One deacon has as many as six per quarter. Several have had none at all since their work came to be understood, or else their applications were only for help to find employment.

Question 5. What time is taken up in attending to these cases?—This Chalmers finds to be on the average *not more than three hours per month.*

As a commentary on these remarkable figures we may take a note which he adds to one of the replies, "I have here to express my acknowledgments for the information that I have received from such monthly reports of their districts as the gentlemen connected with them were pleased to furnish. . . . The truth is, that this practice languished, but from

what cause?—purely from the want of materials. The people, when conducted to a natural state, at length, offer nothing to call forth the observation of those whose ostensible office it is to manage the affairs of their pauperism. 'They sheathe the sword for lack of argument.'"

The four remaining questions ask for further particulars with regard to the sacrifice of time involved, and the nature of the duties.

The replies on the first point are unanimously to the following effect:—"I do not think that the task of managing the pauperism of my district would put a man, in ordinary business, to any sensible inconvenience." Some of them are expressed in much stronger terms. One deacon thought the work would be impossible at first, but after a few months' trial, "so light and pleasant did the duty seem that I thought, if all the other proportions were equally manageable, I could take upon me to manage the whole parish, and attend to my business besides." Another sets down the time required for investigating cases at an hour in five months; but if other duties are included, such as attendance at school examinations and church collections, and making up lists, "then the time must be very considerably greater—probably about one hour and a quarter per month." Another observes that a deacon may make for himself a good deal of employment, but in that case

"he will require to exercise some discretion not to do harm where he wishes to confer a benefit." Several found the work rather burdensome at first, or in the exceptional period of depression of trade, but these difficulties soon passed away. It is also observed that residence in or near the district is a great advantage.

With respect to the necessity for a knowledge of the district and a full inquiry concerning applications, we find a marked agreement. One says, "I am of opinion that the first thing necessary to the proper discharge of the office which I hold, is to get immediately acquainted with every house and family in the proportion; in order to check any imposition which may otherwise be practised, and also to facilitate the investigation of every case which may occur." Various reasons may be noticed; for instance, "that I may be enabled to distinguish betwixt those who deserve parochial aid, and those who do not; and with this knowledge I am enabled to mingle my sympathies with the industrious and well-deserving, and to offer the check of my disapproval to anything improper." Again, the acquaintance is necessary "in order to maintain or produce a right feeling in a district," and the deacon should "endeavour especially to obtain an accurate knowledge of the circumstances of those who seem likely to become applicants; and having arrived at this know-

ledge, he has reached the most advantageous ground for his subsequent operations. Does he meet with a genuine case of distress? he may invite the sympathy and private charity of the neighbours towards it, and thereby provide for the sufferers in a far more ample manner than by a parish contribution. A case in my district of a poor woman, long under a lingering illness, and which terminated in her death, might be adduced to show how much even of comfort sometimes arises out of private charity. This person was unable, for a considerable time, to maintain herself by her own earnings, and yet no desire was manifested for parish aid; the neighbours, and those who had heard of her situation, came forward in her behalf, so that she appeared to stand in need of nothing that was necessary." Another says, "Goodwill and affectionate interest in the affairs of the poor, with minute and persevering inquiry in every case to prevent imposition, will enable the deacon almost to eradicate pauperism from his district." Or, in words of a colleague, "my practical experience has proved, to my entire satisfaction, that a strict investigation of the applicant's situation, and the treating of the case according to its circumstances, is all that is awanting to diminish the number of applications." No. 13 writes in a peculiar style, but he knows how to work:—"The first thing I adopted was to take a list of the population of the whole

district, each family by itself; stating the number of individuals, profession, and probable earnings; and, in addition, noted whatever remarks that occurred of the apparent circumstances of the family. This I renewed annually, and from these statements, when applications are made, I have recourse to this check upon the applicants themselves, and which, with an immediate inquiry into the case, from the testimony of the neighbours and any other information otherwise that may be obtained, I judge of the situation of any particular individual or family." The eighteenth deacon insists on the value of constant intercourse—"I consider it most important for a deacon to be intimately acquainted with every family under his charge, and there is no way he can acquire that knowledge so well as by frequent visitation; besides, the very frequency of his visits gives him a stronger interest in their well-doing, not to mention the reciprocal feeling it creates towards himself, while he is furnished with a store of useful information for every emergency." As for the results of these methods, No. 17 remarks—"Among a number of them I found a keen appetite for parochial aid, and an impression that it was to be more easily acquired by the new arrangements in St. John's Parish. By the making of a survey of the whole proportion, by living almost among them, and frequent conversation with them, I not only acquired a tolerable knowledge of the

characters and dispositions of the people, but I think removed in some degree the notions they had conceived; for during the months I had the charge of from 11 to 1200, not one regular pauper was taken on." It is the common experience that "the applications are much less frequent since I became acquainted in the district."

Have we not here a living exhibition of the two qualifications which Archbishop Temple once declared to be essential to the worker in charity? "The first thing is that he should live upon the spot; the second thing is that he should know what he is doing."

We next set down a few of the special experiences and observations which the deacons thought worthy to be entered in their reports.

No. 1 refers to "three cases of runaway husbands. The first was left with two children, both under three years of age, the youngest at the breast. The second case was left with four daughters under ten years of age, and the youngest at the breast. The third was left about three years before she applied to me, with two children under ten years of age, and an adopted child, for the support of which she had nothing, the father and mother having died some time before. All these cases appear at first sight formidable, and seemingly fit for the exercise of unbounded charity, both public and private; but with the exception of the second case (which, by the bye, was one of a very

interesting nature), none of them received, nor did they require the hand of ill-timed charity to assist them." Unfortunately he does not explain how they were treated. But he concludes thus: "Let it suffice to add that, had liberal means been afforded in those cases to supply their apparent wants, their husbands would never have been found out, and they and their children would have been at this moment in more abject poverty than at their first application."

No. 2. "The advice and assistance of friendship, in cases of family trial or difficulty, I have known to have been well received, and sometimes of great importance to poor families."

No. 3. "I think the two most requisite qualities in a deacon are kindness and firmness—kindness, that the people may be perfectly persuaded he is endeavouring to do everything for their good; firmness, that he may be able to resist pathetic but ill-grounded applications for relief."

No. 4 points out how "a little forbearance, and a few trifling marks of attention, have a wonderful effect in calming down the most insolent, and changing their tone by degrees into an opposite strain. You may recollect, when I visited the district along with you, to give intimation of an address in the church, we met from one man the most repulsive reception; afterwards, by way of experiment, I several times visited the family, got the length of being tolerably

well received, and lately having by accident met the man (for he has been some months out of the district), he stopped and spoke most cordially: said he was 'now doing fine,' and that his children were at school."

He also remarks that "besides these, which may be termed the ordinary means of checking pauperism, there are others which operate powerfully in an indirect way; such as endeavouring to persuade the people to take advantage of the Savings Bank; circulating among them religious and philanthropic intelligence; having occasional meetings with them for reading such sort of intelligence, where the higher and lower classes of the same neighbourhood in a manner come in contact with one another, as well as with the district agency."

No. 11. "I am of opinion that the great point for a deacon to attend to, in warding off pauperism, is in his giving a ready attention to the real wants and distresses of the people—in procuring them work when in want of it—in furnishing medical aid in trouble—and in showing the utmost readiness to aid and alleviate any unavoidable evils, such as insanity, dumbness, blindness, etc.: and at the same time, in giving the most decided opposition to all claims that are the effect, or visible produce, of vice, idleness, intemperance, or improvidence."

In connexion with the last sentence we may quote a few words of advice which Chalmers gave to a new

deacon :—"If drunkenness be a habit with the applicants, this in itself is an evidence of means"—an obvious fact which is very often overlooked—"and the most firm discouragement should be put upon every application in these circumstances. Many applications will end in your refusal of them in the first instance, because, till they have had experience of your vigilance, the most undeserving are very apt to obtrude themselves; but even with them show goodwill, maintain calmness, take every way of promoting the interest of their families, and gain, if possible, their confidence and regard by your friendly advice and the cordial interest that you take in all that belongs to them."

No. 17 refers to the "great commercial stagnation which cast many out of employment for a time, and lowered the wages of all the weavers, of which class my district was chiefly composed. I did all I could in the way of procuring work for the unemployed, and was getting on tolerably well till a general public subscription was made, and soup-kitchens erected. This excited a certain class in my district to have at the subscription, and a deputation waited upon me for this purpose. I reasoned the matter with them, and the consequence was that not more than one person residing in the district received aid from it, and that aid very trifling." He also remarks, "In all my experience as regards pauperism, I have had very few

applications from the regularly sober and industrious, but most of them by those of a very opposite character."

No. 18. "I have brought no case under investigation for ten months. I had indeed two applications within that time, but after a little conversation, they both voluntarily withdrew."

No. 20 says that his only applications were to find work for people, and in these it was not necessary to make inquiries. Several other reports allude to this as the best form of help to the industrious and "a check against the lazy and indolent." He adds, "as I have been so little required to attend to the necessities of the poor, I have acquired little experience which I can offer for the information of others: and the only information I can give is that I have experimentally found I had almost nothing to do." On this Chalmers observes that the "very paucity of his facts and informations is, in itself, most valuable to be known; and I am not aware of a more precious experience than that . . . in some of our most plebeian districts there has been little or nothing to do,"

No. 21 says, "I have always, when I had it in my power, given work to the poor in place of aliment, with which, in general, they were well pleased. I have, in two instances, where a husband left his wife and family, refused them any aid, and the conse-

quence was that the husband, in the one instance, came back to his family; and in the other, that the family found out the husband. Had the court of deacons interfered in this case, and given support to the family, apparently destitute of a husband and father, we should never have seen or heard anything of the husband; but the refusal of all aid from the court of deacons was the only cause, I am fully persuaded, of bringing the family together." Here we may insert a note from Chalmers' Journal, written when he visited Glasgow in 1824. "Called upon Thomas Lilley who, after much resistance on my part, gave me six guineas for parochial objects. The money was rent which he had considered desperate, paid to him by a runaway husband whom our agents had reclaimed, and he therefore considered it as ours, and as due to the support of our parochial system."

We have now seen the sort of men that Chalmers selected for his purpose, and how they were employed. We have seen that they were not blind servants, but free agents working on principles in which they believed. Is it necessary to add that a mere division into districts is not enough? The whole efficacy of the work depends on the spirit in which it is done, the wisdom and industry of those who do it.

CRITICS OF THE SYSTEM.

With such a splendid example of charity at work

in their midst, it seems strange that Glasgow and Scotland should not have been converted; but, on the contrary, it met with a full measure of that abuse which is the reward of those who believe in the independence of the poor. "It was strongly resisted at the outset, vilified and maligned throughout the progress of it, and still after its fulfilment most grievously misinterpreted and misunderstood." All kinds of contradictory arguments were brought against it. A statement of some of them may throw further light on the real merits of the system.

The first was the delusion arising from "the fancied magnitude of our resources." Of course, a famous orator could attract the rich, and bring all the wealth of Glasgow to bear upon his parish. The critic did not stop to notice that, whatever he might have done, Chalmers had in fact done nothing of the kind; that the money of the rich was not devoted to the relief of distress, but only the "humble half-pence" of the poor. In spite of facts and figures this delusion held its ground; for "there is nought of which the public are more incredulous, and yet nought more experimentally true, than that it is not money which is wanted, but such an impulse given to the sobrieties of humble life and the sympathies of nature as, under a simple economy of pauperism, would greatly more than supply its place."

Driven from this position, "these resolute adver-

saries" took refuge in another. They "made discovery that our deacons were all men of unbounded wealth," who "practised a sort of juggle on the public eye," by giving out of their own pockets what must otherwise have come from the church plate. This explanation is "quite in keeping with the plain arithmetical understandings of those who offer it, as also with the mental calibre of those whom it satisfies." There were indeed two elders whose generous instincts caused much anxiety. "The effect of this, especially in one of the districts, was quite notorious. Some of its people, thrown restless and agog, by the facility and open-handedness of the elder, flowed over upon the deacon, and gave us more trouble than half the parish besides." The deacons knew their duty better. Some of them might give a little private help on rare occasions, but many were unable to give at all, and these were the very men who succeeded best.

But what shall be said of the kind-hearted stranger, whose aid would be so readily forthcoming?—"We certainly are not aware of a dozen instances in which the benevolence of the wealthy beyond the parish was called to interpose on behalf of any of our families."

Next comes the opposite and "oft-repeated charge that we starved our poor, and so drove them out of the parish. . . . Our decisive reply is that a register was kept, both of the paupers who left and

the paupers who flowed in upon us, and that our imports exceeded our exports. . . . In March, 1823, or three years and a half after the commencement of our system, 15 of our own paupers had left and 29 of the other Glasgow paupers had come to reside in our parish, the maintenance of whom fell under the charge of our deacons. In 1837 the whole efflux amounted to 29, the influx to 61. The truth is that our system, parsimonious as it was in the distribution of public money, was exceedingly popular"; and in another place he says, "we find it so to our cost . . . The exchange is against us, and this we insist upon as a decisive refutation to the calumny, that the poor are either neglected or maltreated by us."

But if the secret of success did not lie in "the magnitude of our parochial means," or "the harsh and repulsive style" of work, it might be sought in "the unexampled and inimitable strenuousness of our parochial management. It has often been alleged against us that, out of average and every day humanity, no such living apparatus can be raised of men embarked upon a cause where the impulse of novelty and the ambition of success, and the consciousness of many eyes turned in intense and eager scrutiny towards them, have altogether upholden them in a habit of vigilance and activity that cannot be looked for in other parishes." Against this it is pointed out that "excepting in first cases or first applications, such

energy was seldom or never afterwards required of any of our deacons." As soon as they were fairly under way, their office became "the veriest of all sinecures. . . . The extreme facility of this management looks a thing so marvellous as to demand an explanation. . . . To be satisfied with, or even perhaps to understand it, one must have seized on the principle whereon the success of our undertaking hinges. It was not we, in fact, who executed or resolved the problem. The people did it for us. At the very time that we were complimented on the exceeding skill and strenuousness of our administration, we were lying on our oars and doing nothing, we mean nothing in the matter of pauperism, and for this good reason, that nothing or next to nothing was required of us."

The final argument—used by Carlyle, and repeated by later critics of this work—remains. "With a Chalmers in every British parish much might be possible." It is certainly true that he was the guiding spirit at St. John's, and that a leader of the right kind is necessary. But he left all the work in other hands. "The applications for relief never reached me." And even the leadership does not demand any transcendent ability. It only implies a thorough grasp of principles and a sufficient measure of courage and industry to put them into practice. Hundreds of clergymen possess enough ability and energy, if they would but adopt the principles.

Chalmers had no patience with the flattery of these opponents. "Resolute in their hostility, they had recourse to another and desperate fetch." They attacked the system "under the guise of a compliment to its author. At the outset of our enterprise nothing was heard of but the utter folly and weakness of the project; and when it did succeed, they managed to keep up its discredit by ascribing the whole success to the marvellous and præternatural strength of the projector. And so the conclusion was that it would not do in ordinary hands." It was "a Katterfelto exhibition" by the "wonder-worker that had come amongst them from the East." He complains bitterly of their "nauseous eulogies" which give him credit for "phosphoric eloquence, high-sounding oratory, gorgeous imagination, benevolent enthusiasm, in short all but judgment and common-sense. . . . Now really," he adds, "if they will thus persist in magnifying the projector at the expense of his project, let me frankly tell them what the sort of greatness is which I am willing to accept at their hands . . . it is the same in kind, though immeasurably short in degree of the greatness earned by the physician Harvey when he discovered the circulation of the blood. And yet when I think how very palpable the thing is, I cannot surely be said to have discovered before all other men, that internal action, or internal circulation as it may be

called, which takes place within the body politic of a parish. . . . I may have been the first to place such firm reliance on the working of these natural principles, and to count upon them or reason upon them so confidently as I have done, in this question of pauperism."

The best way to defeat this argument was to hand over the work to others. "I accordingly left the parish in November, 1823, and had there been any flaw or failure in our scheme it would soon have bewrayed itself, for never, we venture to say, without a principle of native vigour and vitality in itself, could it have survived for a single year the amount of rough handling to which it was exposed. There was first a lengthened vacancy of near a twelve-month, during which the deacons had it all to themselves—then the brief incumbency of my first successor —then another vacancy, also of unusual duration— then a second successor of whom it may emphatically be said that . . . he left the secular administration exclusively to its own proper office-bearers." He mentions other difficulties and concludes, "never was any mechanism of human contrivance more severely tried, or brought more closely to the touchstone"; yet, in spite of everything, it continued to flourish for fourteen years after he left the city, or eighteen years in all.

Another critic must be noticed, who was not an

enemy. In 1833 the Poor-Law Commissioners of England sent one of their number, Mr. Tuffnell, to examine the system of St. John's. His report first describes the general arrangements in Glasgow, and then the system established by Chalmers, which, he says, "has been attended with the most triumphant success," and is likely to continue "in perfect operation." He considers its chief virtue to consist in the closer investigation of new cases, as opposed to the laxity of the old city management; and mentions the discovery of one recipient of an allowance from the Town Hospital who had eight workmen under him. "In spite, however, of this success, the lovers of the old system still oppose the new as keenly as ever; and there seems to be as much difference of opinion in Glasgow at present respecting its merits as when it was first established." Referring to the question of finance, he observes that the church collections "far exceed what is given in any other parish" in the city; and further, that in any Scottish parish the amount of the church collection will show whether a rate is levied for the poor or not. He lays stress on another point: "The personal attention of the rich to the poor seems to be one of the most efficient modes of preventing pauperism. It is a subject of perpetual complaint that the poor do not receive the charities of the rich with gratitude. The reason of this appears to be that the donation of a few shillings

from a rich man to a poor one is no subtraction from the giver's comforts, and, consequently, is no proof of his interest in the other's welfare: it seems natural and reasonable that there should be some proportion preserved between the gratitude felt for a favour conferred, and the difficulty or inconvenience that the doer of it is put to in conferring it. If the rich give their time to the poor instead of their money, they part with a commodity which the poor see is valuable to the givers, and consequently esteem the attention the more, as it implies an interest in their prosperity; and a feeling seems to be engendered in their minds of unwillingness to press on the kindness of those who thus prove themselves ready to sympathise with them in distress, and to do their utmost to relieve it. This feeling acts as a spur to the exertions of the poor; their efforts to depend on their own resources are greater, and consequently the chance of their becoming dependent on the bounty of others less." He adds that in St. John's Parish the "personal attendance on the poor is carried to the greatest possible extent." Finally, in reference to the suburb of the Gorbals, he says, "all the evidence that I have been able to collect from the residents goes to prove the fact, which is corroborated by so many other examples, respecting the baneful influence of assessments on the morals and numbers of the poor."

This is, indeed, a highly favourable testimony; but the Commission did not see their way to recommend the abolition of the Poor Law. Perhaps it was for this reason that they did not include the evidence of Mr. Tuffnell in their own Report, though it is said to have been circulated in England to the extent of 16,000 copies.

In its earlier days the example of St. John's was not without effect on Glasgow, and Chalmers expressed a sanguine hope that ere long the whole city might be purged of its Poor Law. At one time there were no less than five "retracing parishes"—St. John's, the Outer Kirk, the North-West Parish, St. George's, and St. James'—which had more or less returned to the voluntary system, while the Gorbals had not yet departed from it. The General Session also had discontinued the practice of collecting all the church funds together and redistributing them. But the movement could not last. The forces arrayed against it were too strong. One by one the parishes fell back upon the rates, and St. John's remained the solitary example of independence.

CAUSES OF ITS TERMINATION.

If it be asked why even the last fortress was abandoned to the enemy, the reasons are not far to seek. Some of these were local and others had a wider bearing.

Among the former we find the mere fact of isolation, and the failure to win over the other districts. One parish alone could not hold out for ever when the rest of the city went in the opposite direction. Moreover, two of the conditions, for which the author of the system had stipulated at the outset, had never been fulfilled. No rule had been laid down for mutual protection between St. John's and the other parishes, so that the deacons had not only to deal with their own poor, but were all along "exposed to the addition of a pauperism formed by others without the limit of their own territory." But there was a much greater discouragement, amounting to a gross injustice, in the fact that this independent parish was required to pay the poor rate like all the rest. "Nothing could be more obviously equitable than that a poor parish, the poorest in Glasgow, which had thus struggled its way to its own emancipation from pauperism, and had not for sixteen years drawn a single farthing from the compulsory fund, should itself have been exempted from any further contributions to it. But no. During the whole of that period it cost the Town Hospital nothing, yet during the whole of that period continued to pay the Town Hospital as before, maintaining its own poor, yet subject to all their wonted exactions for the general maintenance of the poor in Glasgow." Thus, the residents were compelled to support the very system

which they had thrown off in their own case, and were trying to abolish altogether. "This is now the precise condition of the parish of St. John's. . . . so managing its own resources as to draw nothing from the great legal treasury for its own pauperism, yet still drawn upon, as before, for all the waste and mismanagement that may be going on around it—helping to uphold that revenue from which it reaps no benefit, and over the expenditure of which it has no control—thus subsidising the whole of Glasgow out of its own scanty means."

At one time it was even suggested that the surplus accumulated at St. John's should be handed over to the Town Hospital for the relief of the general expenditure of the city. This Chalmers denounced as altogether monstrous. Comparing the slender collections of the church with the vast income of the assessment, he says that the idea is very like straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel. "But never was there so thorough an exemplification of the cross-purpose—never were human understandings so totally at antipodes with each other, as when it was proposed to lead the camel forth, that it might feed and fatten on the healthful sproutings of that system which was especially set up with the design to starve it at length into utter extermination."

In the face of these disappointments the deacons

at last gave way. "They were fairly wearied out, and could no longer be expected to maintain the vigilance and strict guardianship of other years, after all hope of a general reformation was extinguished, and no other purpose was now to be served than that of upholding a mere spectacle, a thing not to be copied but only to be stared at, an oasis in the desert. . . . And accordingly in 1837, or eighteen years after the commencement of our enterprise, it was at length desisted from—not by any infirmity of the process itself, in virtue of which the experiment failed; but, which is truly a different thing, by a voluntary determination on the part of the operators, in virtue of which the experiment was given up."

Turning to the larger causes of failure, Chalmers expresses his astonishment at "the obstinate incredulity or rather utter listlessness of the official men in Glasgow . . . the downright obtuseness and perversity of intellect" among the citizens. "Even one decisive experiment in chemistry will establish a principle, that shall remain an enduring certainty in science"; but the experiment which he had made in charity was altogether thrown away. "The lesson given forth was never looked at, never listened to. . . . It was far easier practically to do the thing—to rid that parish of its pauperism —than to convince a single creature that the thing

was practicable." He finds an explanation in the nature of their pursuits. "When I thus speak of the citizens of Glasgow, and complain that their minds were hermetically sealed against the whole truth and evidence of the question, I must not forget that if not exclusively, at least mainly, theirs is a mercantile society; and that, with all the talent and practical sagacity by which they are distinguished in the matters of ordinary business, it was perhaps not to be expected that they should bring these faculties to bear on a question which . . . did not lie within the range of their everyday experience." The community was vigorous, active, and in many ways intellectual; but above all it was a mercantile community. Any scheme in which figures were duly set down and balanced against results to be attained, they could understand and appreciate. It was business-like and a matter of calculation. But they were singularly blind to the merits of a process founded on the study of human nature, and to the far more solid results attainable by indirect means. Hence their preference for a cut and dried system —so many paupers, so many thousand pounds a year; hence their choice of State relief, rather than moral force, as the instrument of progress. This state of mind was well exemplified in Mr. Sheriff Alison, the writer of a book on Population, in which he utterly misrepresented the work of Chalmers.

He was an advocate of artificial schemes, and "we cannot even enumerate the various errors in political economy which may be pointed out in this work."

An equally determined opposition was encountered from another party of an opposite temperament, namely, the short-sighted advocates of humanity, pure and simple. They were personified in Dr. Alison, brother of the Sheriff, a man who lived among the poor and gave them freely not only of his means but of his medical skill and sympathy; yet a man whom his great opponent regretfully described as "a mere lump of benevolence." His self-denying labours could not fail to command admiration, but he was unable to see anything beyond the immediate symptoms of want and suffering or any more hopeful method of treatment than the mere "discharge of positive aliment upon it." Above all he could not bear to wait for any gradual improvement; and, with all the authority of an earnest personal worker, he pressed for the introduction of the Poor Law.

We must also remember the spirit of the age. The English Poor Law was remodelled in 1834, and while so many minds were seeking a remedy for social evils it was natural that they should seek it by the old methods, modified indeed and purged of some of their worst abuses, but not discarded. It was

too much to expect that men should break loose from tradition altogether, admitting that the whole course of this legislation from the days of Elizabeth had been a failure, and begin to build upon a new foundation.

Such were the general forces which at that time could hardly fail to wreck the design of Chalmers. The Scottish Poor Law was introduced in 1844, leaving in one respect a larger field for charity than that of England, since it made no provision for able-bodied men, but otherwise similar and productive of the same evils. Whether a later age, with the wisdom of a longer experience, may at length escape from its bondage, or whether the chains of servitude have been too firmly riveted, is still a question for the future.

We cannot better close our description of St. John's than by the simile of the storm-tossed vessel, which Chalmers once addressed to the General Assembly. "It is a great consolation that, with all the recoil I feel from the stormy element of debate, and all the discomfort wherewith I breathe amid the agitations and the invectives of its turbid atmosphere, the tempest has not arisen till the harbour has been gained—the attack has not been made till the enterprise has been carried onwards to its satisfying termination—and one vessel at least, laden with a rich harvest of experience, has been suffered to deposit its spoils in a place that is impregnable. There is

one parish that has been thoroughly reclaimed from the legal charity of England—that has been conducted back again to the mild and peaceful administrations of our own better economy—and has now traversed the whole distance which lies between a state of compulsory pauperism, and the pauperism which is strictly Scottish, and sessional, and altogether gratuitous. . . . But now that the channel has been forced, and sounded, and explored, it may be obviously attempted by any vessel with ordinary pilotage, in ordinary times. And, therefore, do with the first adventurer what you will—order him back again to the place from which he has departed, compel his bark out of its present secure and quiet landing-place, or let her be scuttled, if you so choose, and sunk to the bottom; still, not to magnify our doings but to illustrate them, we must remind you that the discovery survives the loss of the discovery ship; for, if discovery it must be called, the discovery has been made—a safe and easy navigation has been ascertained from the charity of law to the charity of kindness; and therefore, be it now reviled, or be it now disregarded as it may, we have no doubt upon our spirits, whether we look to the depraving pauperism or to the burdened agriculture of our land, that the days are soon coming when men, looking for a way of escape from these sore evils, will be glad to own our enterprise and be fain to follow it."

APPLICATION TO THE PRESENT TIME.

The standard of charitable work set up by Chalmers appears to be altogether of a higher type than that of any other teacher in this school with whom we are acquainted; and the difference lies in this, that he alone went to the root of the matter, and kept steadily in view the prevention rather than the relief of distress. He made the poor work out their own salvation.

We are surrounded in these days with innumerable agencies of benevolence, which belong, generally speaking, to one of two groups.

There are the purely benevolent people who lose sight of principles and causes altogether; who look no further than the particular case before them, and learn very little even of that; with whom a good intention is enough. They attempt little beyond the alleviation of the trouble that is apparent on the surface; nor do they study their subject with sufficient industry to become aware of the results of their action. This is the popular type of charity recommended by the daily press. To this type belongs most of the charitable work that is carried on in connection with our churches and chapels and relief societies. Too often it is wholly superficial, irregular, inadequate, undisciplined; and, as a matter of course, productive of immense evil to the poor.

As a protest against this shallow sentimentalism, another set of persons have determined to make their work thorough and business-like, to go through with whatever they take in hand, to watch the results and learn by experience. They are in earnest and prepared for labour; they have counted the cost of their undertaking, and do not care for popularity. Their work is a vast improvement on the old style of almsgiving. It is perhaps a necessary step in the evolution of true charity. But here too we find limitations and perils of another kind. It is apt to become mechanical, to sink into grooves so deep that nothing can be seen beyond them, to sacrifice the ultimate aim to the familiar methods and the spirit to the form.

In both cases the source of error is the same. If we compare the work of Chalmers with that of the most carefully regulated agencies of the present day, such as the Elberfeld system, or the best committees of the Charity Organisation Society, we shall find a difference which may be expressed in the terms of his distinction between the natural and the artificial ways of dealing with the poor. All our systems are artificial in comparison with his. They all begin with a false premiss. They assume the necessity for a considerable amount of that interference with the income and expenditure of the people which is known as charitable relief; and they try to regulate its distribution, under the less

objectionable name of help or assistance, so as to do as little harm as possible. It is so much easier to put things straight for other people than to show them how to do it for themselves.

Against these half-measures Chalmers set his fundamental doctrine of the sufficiency of the poor—a fact on which few, if any, of our workers will venture to rely. Starting from this basis, he would avoid even the most ingenious and adequate relief, as tending to undermine it. His persistent effort was to form habits in the people which would enlarge and strengthen it. For this task he trained his workers, and upon it he concentrated all their energies. As the purpose and the work were different from ours, so were the results. Instead of a wholesale demoralisation of the poor, or only a partial enfeeblement of the more worthy section of them, he strove to stimulate the vigour and self-reliance of all; and in a few years he practically cleared the parish of public charity. That was his natural method of improving the condition of the poor.

The weakness of an artificial method is apparent in the general course of its operations and in the application of each particular maxim.

If we begin by the distribution of relief, we may give it without plan or principle, in which case it is wholly injurious. Or, to escape this, we may surround ourselves with a network of committees, forms and regulations, which will go far to stifle the spirit of

friendship altogether. Chalmers held that no man could deal rightly with a poor family, unless he already had an intimate acquaintance with them on grounds altogether distinct from relief.

We may accept the maxim that thorough investigation is required. No one insisted on it more than Chalmers. The deacon was to have the fullest knowledge of his case, but he was to gain it in a natural way. What is the course adopted by the best of our societies? To call the man an applicant, summon him to an office, and state his case to a committee—the very things that the deacon would avoid at any cost. The deacon was already on the spot, long before any need arose, in the character of a wise friend who had express directions to prevent his client from making any formal application or coming within reach of a committee. The difficulty would be settled out of court, and the court itself became unnecessary.

Again, it may be said that the art of contrivance is an essential attribute of the skilled worker. But this also may become a substitute for self-reliance, and therefore unnatural. With all our admiration for the perseverance and ingenuity which are often shown in devising plans for the benefit of persons in distress, and working them out regardless of expense, we cannot help seeing that such is often the result, and that the deacon would have done still better. He would have

been behind the scenes from the beginning, and would have found out a means of removing the distress without external help.

In pointing out the defects inherent in the most judicious systems of relief, we must not underrate the value of systematic work as a step in the right direction. To organise charitable relief is an inferior task to organising charity; but it may certainly prevent much evil, and in particular cases it may do great good. In so far as any system tends to check applications and the giving of alms, it is no doubt beneficial to the poor, by throwing them upon their own resources, and this will most surely be the result of thorough and methodic work, which opens the eyes of those engaged in it to the realities of life. If they are prepared to take up charity in earnest and to give full time and labour to it, they are on the road to that positive work which alone can cure distress. They will not long be content with giving, but will aim rather at promoting thrift and forming character. In proportion as this higher work is undertaken, the system, so far as it stands in the way, will no doubt be modified.

The parochial clergy have an immense advantage over the best agencies which have been formed to guide the administration of relief. They are strong where the societies are weak. They have a territorial system, divided into small areas, and occupied by a

band of visitors with a moral mission to the poor. They can exert the highest kind of influence. These are the very conditions which Chalmers established in his model parish. But here the resemblance ceases. Our clergy do not use their instruments for his purpose. The position has been thrown away. The natural relationship between the people and their friends has been destroyed by almsgiving, and that too often of the very worst kind—inadequate almsgiving at the hands of visitors uncontrolled by discipline or knowledge.

What conclusion shall be drawn from these reflections? Is it not that which Chalmers drew when he pressed for a close alliance between those who study social economy as a science and those whose hearts are most deeply sensitive to the sorrows of their neighbours? The more they learn to know each other, the more clearly will they perceive that there is no valid cause of difference to separate them. If we are sympathetic, surely we would fain prove it by the most useful sort of work; if we have energy to labour after wisdom, surely it is because we sympathise. The character of every worker must be made complete on both sides, that Charity may have her perfect way.

There remains one final question which will not be set aside. Was Chalmers right or wrong in his way of dealing with the poor? If he was wrong, how shall we account for the solid and satisfactory results which

he obtained, contrasting so strangely with the failures and disappointments of those who, with equal devotion, have travelled by another road? If he was right, is there no clergyman of the present day who will accept him as a guide, and follow on the lines which he has traced? Human nature is not altered, and the same process will produce the same effects upon it. Let district visitors be trained after the manner of the Glasgow deacons, and we shall see another parish like St. John's.

CHAPTER VIII.

SCENES FROM MIDDLE LIFE.

"Keep thyself then simple, good, pure, serious, free from affectation, a friend of justice, a worshipper of the gods, kind, affectionate, strenuous in all proper acts. . . . Reverence the gods, and help men. Short is life. There is only one fruit of this life on the earth, a pious disposition and social acts."—*Marcus Aurelius.*

At the close of his Glasgow ministry we are but halfway through the working life of Chalmers. From the height to which he has climbed a wider view extends before him. After a brief interval of comparative rest he enters on a larger field, and exerts a more powerful influence than before on the men and movements of his time. On three separate occasions we shall find him personally engaged in the old task of cultivating small territories. But his voice is heard throughout the ensuing years, asserting the truths which he has made his own, on the platform, in the pulpit, in the lecture-room, by published writings and private correspondence, by interviews with public men and

intercourse with those who tread the humbler paths of life.

The question has been asked why he withdrew so suddenly from the high position which he had won for himself in Glasgow. Why this strange sacrifice of power at a moment when the chief difficulties of his enterprise had been surmounted and the prospect was fair for the extension of his great reforms? He gives three reasons for the step. One has been already noticed. The time had come when the parochial system might succeed better in other hands; it would thus be seen whether it were dependent on the talents of its founder or would last by virtue of its own inherent vitality. The second reason should suffice alone; it was "a reason of necessity." The united labours of the parish and the pulpit, always conducted at high pressure, were telling on his health. "My very last attempt at exertion out of doors has been followed up by several weeks of utter incapacity for fixed thought. I find it impossible any longer to acquit myself both of the personal and mental fatigues of my present office." And again, after leaving, he says: "The truth is that I was upon a most violent and unnatural strain there. . . . It was not another parish but another profession that I deemed indispensable to my health." The third reason was that the growth of his operations in Glasgow had opened out a wider field before him. Beyond the limits of parish

and town he realised the national aspect of the questions involved in the improvement of the poor. He felt that his power of influencing men must be exerted on the whole community. The old ambition for literary eminence stimulated him to reach a larger audience through the press. He must arrange his views on pauperism, and publish them. For this leisure was indispensable.

Already the ground had been prepared by a remarkable journey of seven weeks which he undertook in the year before he left St. John's.

AN ENGLISH TOUR IN 1822.

Unlike his other journeys, this one was not undertaken as a holiday excursion, or to promote Church objects, but solely to examine the working of the English Poor Law in many districts on the spot. He travelled by coach and post-chaise, with frequent help from the carriages of friends. The time seems short, but hardly a moment was lost. Everything was planned in advance. At a given hour he would be met by the Poor Law officials of a certain district with their information ready; a discussion followed, in the course of which he took shorthand notes of what they said; and a private half-hour would suffice to put the notes in order. He consulted everybody who had any special knowledge, and read up his subject on the road. When we remember the difficulties of locomotion

in those days we are amazed at the distance which he traversed. Starting between 4 and 7, he was seldom in bed before 12 or 1; thus the day was so lengthened as to afford time for visiting additional places in the neighbourhood of the towns at which he halted. It was, of course, impossible for Chalmers to move about without being thronged with visitors and urged to give addresses, which he endeavoured to evade. Sunday was not a day of rest for him. It will be interesting to condense a few pages from his diary. We shall catch a glimpse of England under the old Poor Law. We shall see Chalmers under a new aspect, and understand what he meant by getting up a subject.

Starting from Glasgow he passed through Kilmarnock to *Dumfries*, reading in the coach, amongst other things, "a large pamphlet by Mr. Davison on the Poor Laws." Here he met some of the chief men at breakfast. "I put my questioning powers upon their full exercise . . . and upon the whole I have gotten most satisfactory information in this place." After preaching in one of the churches he went to the poor-house, "where I had a conference with the dignitaries and got all the information I wanted. I also inspected the establishment, and took in a powerful impression from my sight of the aged and orphan inmates."

The first important place in England was *Carlisle*,

where he arrived by post-chaise on September 4. "Met here with most satisfying information from Mr. N. A crowd of other people here also." From 11 to 12 at night "I wrought at winding up my narrative."

Thursday.—Starting at 7 he travelled over the Shap pass, reading a pamphlet on the Poor Laws, and reaching *Kendal* between 1 and 2. Here he went over the workhouse, interviewed the Mayor, Recorder, and Overseer, and dined with "a very superior company." Several names are mentioned particularly. "I have prospered to my uttermost wish in Kendal," and again, "I am much pleased with my doings at Kendal, and have accumulated a great deal of substantial information."

Friday.—The coach departed again at 7 for a drive of 76 miles to *Liverpool*, in the course of which he "finished Courtenay on the Poor Laws." Arriving at Everton after 8, "I requested an hour of my bedroom before supper, where I got comfortably forward with my various writings."

Saturday was a long day, which began with two hours' writing before half-past eight. Breakfast included conversation with a most intelligent Quaker. "He talked, and I took shorthand notes, and this went on among ladies and tea-cups and plates of buttered toast. The thing that charms me in Liverpool is the business rapidity and distinctness wherewith

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all my interviews and queries are gone through. Miss —— obtruded her reports upon me, which are good in their season; but I have no room for anything at present but pauperism." Calls were paid in the morning, including one to Mr. Gladstone, father of the premier, who had not given much attention to the subject, "but it is good to have the kindness of members of Parliament on your side, whether you have their understandings or not." On leaving the town he says, "I am now quite ripe on the pauperism of Liverpool." The 2 o'clock coach reached *Manchester* at 7. "I was not long there before I smelt a design against me to preach," and this, with a second sermon, destroyed the "prospect of a quiet domestic Sabbath."

The morning of Monday was spent in writing and the reception of visitors. Then he went to a conference with the borough-reeve of Manchester, and another with the borough-reeve and select vestrymen of Salford, who imparted "all the requisite information," and so to bed between 12 and 1.

Tuesday was "a day of whirl and confusion, and most unfortunately ceremony and invitations and calls are beginning to mix with my objects, and sadly to impede them. . . . An immense party of citizens came to dinner. . . . We had speechifying, and . . . the party sat up most unconscionably late."

Flying before this hospitality, he reached *Birmingham* at 5 on Wednesday, where various citizens at at once "came in and passed under my questioning process."

On Thursday he is busy writing at 7. A numerous party come in for breakfast and the discussion of pauperism. A visit to the Charity Workhouse is followed by various calls, and a drive of 26 miles to *Worcester* by 7 p.m. "There was a great *posse* of friends and neighbour ministers assembled to receive me, and I expatiated among them on pauperism. . . . We all took supper together, and I, after writing and extending my notes, went to bed about 12."

Friday.—Up at 7, and went out to breakfast with a minister from the country, "whom I questioned well about pauperism. . . . After breakfast held parley with some of the official gentlemen of the place, and had indeed a most lucid and satisfying conversation with them." A treat followed in the shape of an excursion through the town, and a view of the "glorious scene" from the Cathedral tower. "It was a most brilliant day, and altogether the place and the people are very dear to me." Leaving at 2, he went through Cheltenham to *Gloucester* by a road placarded with advertisements of his approaching visit.

Saturday.—"Had a satisfying conversation with some city gentlemen about the pauperism of

Gloucester," and another grand view from a Cathedral tower. The next three nights were spent with his brother-in-law, Mr. Morton.

On the Monday he "sat for information all forenoon, and writing. The plan was that I should write between calls downstairs, and thus do a deal of business in the presence of the family. This I have completely succeeded in doing. The overseer of Woodchester came in first with his information, and then the overseer of Horsley." In the afternoon they rode out on horseback to consult with a large landed proprietor. "On our return we spent an hour or two in the vestry at Horsley, when I felt deeply interested by the business of their monthly meeting, and had the opportunity of witnessing the altercations and ungainly features of English pauperism. People who earn thirty shillings a week coming with applications—some for rent, others because the wife had taken sick. It was to me a novel but richly edifying scene."

Tuesday.—The *Bristol* coach was off before 7, reaching its destination about mid-day. "A most convenient retreat" was provided by a friend with the opportunity "of writing for two hours ere I sally out to my operations in this place." Then they walked up to Clifton, where he passed the night. "At tea there came in my informers. . . . I got all the facts and details."

Driving down on Wednesday in time to catch the early coach, he finds the porter missing, has to wait for his luggage, and overtakes the coach in a post-chaise, six miles on the road. Arriving at *Wells* he is driven on by the Bishop to Glastonbury, and then taken over the Cathedral. He secures half-an-hour's conversation with the overseer, and meets twenty people at dinner to discuss the subject of the poor.

On Thursday his friends drove him to Bruton, and he took a post-chaise on to *Sherborne*, where his brother Patrick had "engaged people to come and be my informers about the pauperism of the neighbourhood." One of these, a sagacious but talkative agriculturist, kept him up to midnight, "though he saw me overborne with drowsiness."

Friday.—Between 4 and 5 he was away in a post-chaise to meet Lord Calthorpe at Salisbury by 1 o'clock, and proceed in his carriage through the autumn scenery of the New Forest to *Southampton*. Here he met Sturges Bourne, whose name is connected with a well-known Act of Parliament, and 'liked him very well; but I fear that he is not prepared to coalesce with me to the full extent of my views upon pauperism, and that perhaps I may have discomposed him a little by the tenacity wherewith I stood up not for the regulation of a compulsory fund, but for the total annihilation of it."

"Saturday.—Started at 4. Got on to *Portsmouth* a little after 7." After a breakfast at the George, "went forward in my investigations of pauperism at Portsmouth, Portsea, and Gosport. I spent a very busy forenoon, during which I conversed with the Mayor . . . and many others." The rest of the day was occupied in visiting and a dinner in the dockyard. After which he saw no other way of fulfilling his engagements "than by going forward in a night coach, which left Portsmouth at 8 and carried me to London at 7 in the morning. . . . I was not able to sleep, and never could in travelling; so that with the fatigue and sleeplessness of former days, I was pretty well prepared for repose during the first day of my arrival in the metropolis." A friend conveyed him to Homerton, where after breakfast he went to bed for three hours. But he was preaching at 3 in the afternoon and again at half-past 6.

In *London* he spent a week to the same purpose. He met many eminent people by the way, amongst whom the Macaulays, father and son, were greatly interested in his study of the poor; but "my business at present is with men of parochial management, and not with grandees of any sort." On this errand he went to Marylebone Workhouse, to Cheapside, to Clapham—where the Rector was persuaded "to attempt the imitation of my pauperistic process even in the face

of the existing laws"—to Shoreditch, Whitechapel, and St. Giles. In the last district he entered houses in some of the worst streets, and "witnessed both the extremes of human wretchedness and human wickedness; yet a welcome on the part of the people that convinced me how susceptible they might be under the local system of a wholesome impression. I then visited the St. Giles workhouse, and saw the out-pensioners and overseers in contact, or rather in conflict, with each other. It was big with interest to see hundreds of them penned together in a small yard, and waiting their turn to be called in." At the neighbouring parish of St. Luke's he "witnessed a similar concourse." After a dinner-party with Zachary Macaulay, he writes, "things do look very hopeful as to the introduction of the matter into Parliament."

He also inspected the *suburbs* of Stanmore, Upton, and Westham. At Upton, Mrs. Fry and the Gurneys were seen. This part of the journey ended with a sermon to 3000 people.

The return to Scotland began with an excursion through *Essex* and *Suffolk*. The first halt was at Bocking, "where the pauperism is in a most diseased state," of which a farmer gave particulars. Another farmer appeared at Halstead, also "in a very distempered state of pauperism indeed." Staying with one of the Hanburys at Holfield Grange, he met the overseer of

Coggeshall, and thence passed on to Bury St. Edmunds, where a local magistrate gave information. Lord Calthorpe and Mr. Wilberforce found him at the Angel Inn, and conveyed him to a house of the former at Ampton, where he met Clarkson, and conversed, not about slavery, but the poor of the parish and neighbourhood. Returning to Bury they found official men ready with their "testimonies" about five very important parishes. "I got very well on and at tea had Mr. Wilberforce in a corner and made good progress with him on the topic of pauperism. . . . I can perceive that my articles in the *Edinburgh Review* on pauperism have made a deeper impression throughout England than I was aware of. This I have collected from various parts of the country."

Returning through Cambridge towards the Great North Road he found it convenient to go as far south as "the East India College," now known as *Haileybury*, where he spent a night and "had much of kindred and substantial converse with Mr. Malthus." Early next morning he was at *Hatfield* ready for the Bedford coach, and the interval before its arrival was turned to good account. "I found that the innkeeper at Hatfield had been overseer of his parish, so that while waiting there for the coach I was not idle altogether, but yoked upon him, and posed him well with questions. Lord Cranbourne, son to

the Marquis of Salisbury, I found to be a fellow-overseer of his, and I thought that I could not do less than leave a set of my publications for the joint benefit of my host and his lordship: the latter I understand to feel a particular interest in the subject." At *Bedford* "I got documents illustrative of the pauperism of the town, and then went on with Mr. Richmond in his gig to Turvey. . . . After tea the two overseers of the parish came in . . . I made Mr. Richmond a firm proselyte to my system." He was now fairly started on the way home, and records the strength and refreshment that he derived from being eight hours in bed for once. At *Olney* he "was shown the house and garden of our dear poet Cowper," and "got a great deal of light on the subject of pauperism." Fifty miles coaching took him from Newport Pagnell to *Leicester*, where, the next day being Sunday, he had of course to preach two sermons. On Monday there were many interviews with Leicester gentlemen, who gave a full account of the state of things there; and he found in Mr. Whitmore "a very great Parliamentary acquisition to the good cause."

The diary is here cut short, and we next find him across the border at Kelso, resting at length after "the very bustling and variegated career which I have run."

Such are a few of the chief incidents in a narrative

which occupies 40 pages of the *Memoirs*. Perhaps they may suffice to show that the opinions of Chalmers were based on very practical investigation.

A note may here be added on the frequent tours which Chalmers made in England and Scotland, and described in long letters to his wife and children. We trace his footprints in every part of the country. We find him inhaling the east wind on a Scottish promontory, penetrating the caverns of Derbyshire, exploring the Giant's Causeway. He is entertained in "baronial halls" or fraternises with the country clergy in their villages. He enjoys the kindred society of the learned at Oxford and Cambridge, and often appears in London for public purposes, as at the first levees of William IV. and Queen Victoria, to represent the claims of his Church, or to press his views on leading men. Wherever he goes his eyes are open to the wonders of nature and the ways of mankind; his letters are full of sketches of life and scenery more than fifty years ago. One ambition which he lived to realise was to ascend to the summit of all the English cathedrals. He went to Ireland twice, and once to France; but he knew his own island well.

ST. ANDREWS AND EDINBURGH.

Amongst the many posts which Chalmers was competent to occupy, none had a greater attraction

for him than the professorial chair. He liked the position for its own sake, but especially as a means of training others for work instead of only doing it himself. "I have been visited," he says, "of late by my old ambition for a professorship—that is, however, a theological professorship, where, with God's blessing, I think I could do infinitely greater good to the cause than by fagging among the details of one parish and one congregation. All the civic purposes that were to be served by my peculiar management are now as good as accomplished; and to make ministers is a far higher function than to be a minister." He illustrates his meaning by analogy. "You know that a machine, in the hand of a single individual, can do a hundred-fold more work than an individual can do by the direct application of his own hands. He who makes the machine, then, is more productively employed than he who, without it, engages immediately in the work. To produce a steam-engine which sets one hundred looms agoing, is a far larger contribution to the goods of the country than to work at a single loom. This principle, obvious enough in manufactures, is sadly overlooked in the business of human society. The man who spends so much time in the services of a philanthropic institution, is not so productively employed as he who excites the principle which prompts those services in the breasts of a hundred men. He who does the

work is not so productively employed as he who multiplies the doers." It is a high office to be a Christian minister and to catch men; it is a still higher office "to be employed in teaching and training the fishers of men."

So he returned to the old Alma Mater which had received him as a student at the age of 12, and accepted her Chair of Moral Philosophy at a salary of £300 a year. It was a small place to live in after Glasgow, though venerable as an ancient seat of learning, and deeply interesting to Chalmers from its time-worn ruins and historical associations. He was soon employed in many ways besides lecturing. Much of his time was occupied in literary work; he finished the *Christian and Economic Polity of a Nation* and began the *Political Economy*, by delivering lectures on that subject, which had gained a new importance from the excitement following the Repeal of the Combination Laws. There were vacations of six weeks, in which he travelled about in Scotland and the North of Ireland. Once he went by sea to London, after the offer of a Metropolitan professorship, and had intercourse with Peel and Brougham, Macaulay and Coleridge, and other men of note. Twice he spent a month or more in Glasgow, encouraging his successor and the agency at St. John's; these were "seasons of crowded occupancy" rather than holidays. There were sermons to be preached in many places.

He was also frequently in Edinburgh, taking a leading part in the debates of the General Assembly, and promoting the Evangelical movement which was gaining ground against the old spirit of Moderatism.

From all this public activity we turn to a bit of local work on the old lines. Chalmers had no parish duties at St. Andrews; but he could not stay long in any place without seeking for a means of intercourse with his poorer neighbours. He set about it in a characteristic way. Instead of trying to win over one of the parochial clergy, or addressing meetings, he began to visit and make friends with the labouring families near his own residence, and soon had a small class of their children coming to him on Sabbath evenings. By the third session it had grown too large for the accommodation of a house which was also frequented by another class of University students who came for religious teaching of a more advanced kind. Instead of cutting off either, he combined the two. The students were employed to teach the children, and they soon proceeded "to divide the town into districts, to visit all the families, and to establish flourishing schools in almost every necessitous quarter." They worked under the parish clergy, and thus from small beginnings a local system of religious education was established. The students next began to hold prayer meetings, to visit and attract the parents of these children, of whom many never attended church.

One of the most zealous workers records his conviction that this is "a most efficient system for evangelising large towns"; adding that "Churchmen and Dissenters all went hand in hand, and we forgot that there was any distinction." At this stage the Professor came forward and gave a further impetus to the movement. He became president of a Missionary Society, and delivered public lectures on mission work at the Town Hall. The example was eagerly followed by his pupils. They formed an association of their own for the same purpose, which at first met with a cold reception from the authorities, but soon won their favour when they saw the change of tone which it produced throughout the University. Before the advent of Chalmers the students of St. Andrews had been "a singularly godless class." In after years it was noticed how many of his pupils had gone out as missionaries to India. So far across the ocean did the circles spread from the little stone cast by Chalmers when he began to visit a few poor families.

In 1828 Dr. Chalmers was drawn from his comparative retirement, and called to "the most honourable and influential position which any minister of the Church of Scotland could occupy," being elected Professor of Divinity at Edinburgh. At last the "King of Scotland" was seated on his throne; but the elevation was not accepted without regret. "On looking back upon my city experience I have little

more than the dazzling recollection of a feverish and troubled dream, while athwart this medium, and at a larger distance in the retrospect, I can enjoy the sweet prospect of a country parish, all whose scenes and cottage families are dear to me. I know that I am to repeat this experience, and am quite sure that, amid the din, and the confusion, and the crowded attendance of that larger theatre to which I go, I shall often look back with a sigh on the closer and the kindlier fellowships that I have held with the students within these walls." He held the Chair of Divinity for fifteen years, when the Disruption compelled him to resign it. By that time half the ministers of the Church had passed through his hands as students. He could travel from one end of Scotland to the other, and spend each night in the manse of one of his former pupils." Henceforth Edinburgh was his home to the end of his life.

We have arrived at a point where it will be convenient to notice a chain of events bearing on the whole public life of Chalmers.[1] When the struggle for national existence had ended at Waterloo the nation could turn its attention to the state of things at home. It was time. There were terrible abuses in those days—social, political, industrial. There were mighty forces at work for improvement. The extension of knowledge and of sympathy, the growth of

[1] See Dodds' *Thomas Chalmers*, pp. 211-13.

population, the development of machinery and steam-power, of invention and discovery—these and other signs gave proof in the succeeding years of the awakened energies of the people. Industrial questions became of the first importance. Old systems and class prejudice were forced to yield. The working-men were shaking off their bonds, determined to win their way to independence. In 1824-5 the Combination Laws were repealed. At the period we have reached a powerful impulse was given to the new ideas by the Continental Revolutions of 1830 and their English counterpart, the Reform Act of 1832. The worst abuses of the old Poor Law were at length put down by the Act of 1834.

The same upheaval was apparent in the religious world. In 1828 the Repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts threw open the public service to Dissenters; it was followed by Catholic Emancipation in 1829; both measures had the hearty support of Chalmers. But the spirit of freedom was not satisfied by the removal of disabilities; it proceeded to question privilege and authority of every kind. On the one side its influence was shown by a great increase of energy within the Churches, on the other by the appearance of a Voluntary Church Association which aimed at the overthrow of all Establishments. The answer of the Scottish hierarchy was a demand for Church Extension—in other words, for the extension and

confirmation of the old parochial system. Chalmers carried this movement far ahead, but its very success gave birth to new impediments. The dispute about patronage was lost in the larger debate on the limits of State interference with the rights of the Church, and the further question whether the Church had any rights at all. The Scottish Establishment thus became engaged in a struggle with Dissenters and Democrats alike, which culminated in the secession of nearly 500 ministers at the Disruption. Such were the stormy elements in which Chalmers was involved for the next fifteen years.

THE IRISH POOR LAW.

In 1830 Chalmers went to London to be examined by a Committee of the House of Commons on the subject of a Poor Law for Ireland. He gladly seized the opportunity for setting forth his opinions and experiences in a public manner. The evidence, amounting to 377 questions and replies, is printed as an Appendix to the *Polity of a Nation*, and forms a document of great interest, from which many of our extracts have been taken. Beginning with a history of Poor Relief in Scotland, and an account of the condition of affairs at the date of the inquiry, he is next questioned fully about his three successive parishes, and encouraged to illustrate the various problems that arise by discourses and examples. In

fact the greater part of the evidence is more like a lecture, or series of short addresses, by the professor, than an examination by the Committee. It is not till §204 that we definitely reach the Irish question. He admits at once the lack of a minute acquaintance with that country, but expresses a "great faith in the identity of human nature all the world over." We select a few passages from the evidence under this head.

If a country be in a state of transition, as, for instance, in the case of Ireland, from small farming to the consolidation of large estates, "the small cottagers passing into the state of labourers," will that circumstance render the principle of assessment advisable or necessary?—By no means. It would have "just the same effect upon the population now about to leave their farms, that it has upon operative manufacturers in a season of depression; it would keep them together, and subject the parishes permanently to the evil resulting from a redundant population, and prevent that natural distribution of the people which is best adapted to the new state of things."

But if the population be "chiefly potato-fed, which is a crop attended with great fluctuations and casualties," must we not have a system of compulsory relief?—"I think it would just add to the recklessness and improvidence of the people, and so land

the country in a still greater population, without increased means of maintaining them."

At this point the witness finds an opportunity for introducing his favourite doctrine "that character is the cause, and that comfort is the effect. It does not appear that if you lay hold of a man thirty or forty years old, with his inveterate habits, and improve his economic condition by giving him, through a poor-rate or otherwise, £3 or £4 a year more—it does not appear to me that this man will be translated thereby into other habits or higher tastes, but he will dissipate it generally in the same reckless and sordid kind of indulgence to which he had been previously accustomed; whereas, if instead of taking hold of the man, and attempting to elevate him by the improvement of his economic condition, you take hold of the boy, and attempt to infuse into him the other element, which I conceive to be the causal one, by means of education—then you will, through the medium of character, work out an improvement in his economic condition. What I should advise is that education be made universal in Ireland, and that you should weather for a season the annoyance of Ireland's mendicity, and the annoyance of that pressure which I conceive to be altogether temporary. . . . I think that if patiently waited for, very great results might be looked for ere another generation pass away; but then the establishment of a Poor

Law would throw a very heavy obstruction indeed on that educational process to which alone I look for a permanent improvement in the state of Ireland."

What would you say if it can be shown that the population and the improvident habits have increased more rapidly in Ireland without a Poor Law, than in England with one?—The effect is due to other causes. Ireland has been misgoverned and left in ignorance. In England "there has been a gradual elevation of the people, keeping pace with its commerce, its growth in general opulence, its pure administration of justice. The better condition of its people is no more due to its poor-rate than it is to its national debt. Its high standard of enjoyment is not in consequence of its poor-rate, but in spite of its poor-rate." All that a Poor Law can attempt is "to rescue a fraction of the people from extreme wretchedness"; other means must be employed to improve their condition, "for that is really not the way of raising a people."

Do we not find that improvidence is in direct proportion to misery and degradation?—"I think that the causal and antecedent influence in the whole matter is a moral one."

The debate continues for some time on the standards of life, and on the supposed necessity of a poor law for certain purposes. Incidentally it is mentioned that a large number of the poor in St.

John's were Irish, and that they had "a deteriorating effect" upon their neighbours. "Yet, I must say I liked the Irish part of my parishioners. They received me always with the utmost cordiality, and very often attended my household ministrations, although Catholics."

The Committee next inquire concerning special methods of improving the condition of the people, by legislation or otherwise, and a discussion follows on the lines of his book on Political Economy. One of their suggestions is *Emigration,* which has been so largely applied to Ireland. It is, of course, idle to dwell on the splendour of "the harvests that wave on the face of Jupiter" unless that planet is accessible; and even if the expense and difficulty of the journey can be overcome, we cannot thus find anything like a remedy for over-population. The subject had aroused much interest in Glasgow within the memory of Chalmers. Many had gone, and more had talked of going. But "I may here state that the appearance of a disposition to emigrate is very much magnified beyond, I think, the reality of the disposition. I remember, before I left Glasgow, that there were emigration societies comprising altogether, if I am right, 4000 members, which of course would represent to the eyes of people at a distance the extent of this disposition to emigrate. I was waited upon by the deputies of that society, and

requested to aid the business of their correspondence with London. I answered that I did not feel myself able to do anything for the general associated body; but that if they would detach all those members who belonged to the parish of St. John's, I would do what I could for them. They turned out to be nine in number; I felt this to be manageable enough, and easily found means to obtain a collection for the expenses of their removal to Canada. When the men saw, however, that this emigration was looking at them in good earnest, they all, without one exception, chose to remain at home." In view of this dislike for exile, he allows considerable value to emigration as a test and measure of distress. It is also useful as a method of relieving a temporary pressure. But "were an emigration scheme to become a constant part of the national system, the habit of the people would be accommodated thereto, and we should be kept in the state of a country at all times running over, a state that would imply the misery of an oppressed and straitened condition." Elsewhere he notices the comparison of emigration to a safety-valve. A country which "requires to be disgorged from year to year of its redundant families is comparable to a vessel that is always on the eve of bursting. . . . A safety-valve in the boiler implies a great force of distension within; and surely it were better for every land that the

distension were prevented, than that it were only relieved and kept down to a certain maximum which cannot be sustained without a strongly felt violence and discomfort within the borders of the territory." And as with this, so with all other special remedies. They may help in the transition to a better state of things. The moral remedy alone provides a cure.

Another paragraph is worthy of consideration. The Committee ask, "Is not the tendency of the system of the Poor Laws to produce pauperism, and the tendency of a system of extended charitable relief to produce mendicancy?" Again he returns to the true cause: "I think that it depends altogether upon the state of the population as to character and morals." But he proceeds thus: "It is a most important question for Ireland, whether you will submit for a time to its mendicity, or exchange that mendicity for a regular and compulsory pauperism. Now, on many accounts I would prefer the former to the latter alternative; and one of my reasons is, that education will at length quell the one but not the other. . . . I think that this admits of historical illustration. The mendicity of Scotland gave way in a few years to its education. The pauperism and education of England have for many years advanced contemporaneously. I do not believe that the most efficient system of education which can possibly be devised will ever make head against the pauperism of England; at the

very most, it would but give rise to two populations, distinguished from each other by opposite extremes of character. I should therefore be exceedingly sorry if Irish mendicity were exchanged for English pauperism. I think that the floating mendicity of Ireland will fall under the operation of those moral causes which might be brought to bear upon it; but if, in order to escape from this, you establish a law of pauperism, you will in fact establish so many parochial fixtures, a nucleus in every parish, around which your worst population will gather, and from which you will find it impossible to dislodge them." Is not this precisely the experience of every Poor Law Union in the kingdom?

The concluding part of the evidence is directed to the "specific" of education in which Chalmers had such confidence. The Scottish system has already been described in Chapter III. Here we need only refer to the religious question, which would give rise to special difficulties in the case of Ireland. Chalmers could speak from experience in this matter, the more so from the fact that the Scottish education was of "a very decidedly religious character"; he would not otherwise have valued it so highly. It included the reading of the Bible and a daily examination upon the Catechism. As to the position of the clergy, there was "a very close affinity between the parish minister and the parish school"; there was also "an annual

examination of all the schools within the bounds of the Presbytery, conducted by a committee of their number, and made the subject of an annual report." The religious instruction was carried on by the schoolmaster, but "the minister may exercise an habitual inspection as he chooses." The master was elected by the heritors and the minister, and subject to dismissal by the Presbytery.

Under these circumstances one might anticipate some friction with the other religious communities. On the part of the Protestant churches it would not amount to more than jealousy, for their doctrines were the same; they were dissenters only "on the score of patronage." But the case was very different with regard to the many Roman Catholics in Glasgow. It is interesting to hear how, in spite of his strong objection to their tenets, this large-minded man was able to establish very cordial relations with their workers. In the case of a school supported by the Catholic School Association, "we made what we thought a very good compromise with the Catholic clergyman; he consented to the use of the Bible, according to the authorised version, as a school-book, we consenting to have Catholic teachers; and upon that footing the education went on, and went on I believe most prosperously, and with very good effect. From the mere delight I had in witnessing the display and the exercise of native talent among the young

Irish, I frequently visited that school, and I was uniformly received with the utmost welcome and respect by the schoolmaster. I remember, upon one occasion, when I took some ladies with me, and we were present at the examination of the school for about two hours, he requested, at the end of the examination, that I would address the children. I felt a kind of momentary embarrassment at the proposal. I was resolved, however, to address them as I would any Protestant children, and accordingly did address them, for perhaps a quarter or nearly half an hour, urging upon them that Scripture was the alone rule of faith and manners, and other wholesome Protestant principles. The schoolmaster, so far from taking the slightest offence, turned round and thanked me most cordially for the address I had given.

"That schoolmaster being a Roman Catholic?—That schoolmaster being a Roman Catholic; it really convinced me that a vast deal might be done by kindness, and by discreet and friendly personal intercourse."

Did you meet with any contradiction on the part of their clergy?—"Not in the least, for the clergyman was a party in the negotiation; he attended our meetings, and there was a mutual understanding between the clergyman and the members of the Committee: nay, a good many members of the Committee were themselves Roman Catholics, and I

remember when I was asked to preach for the Roman Catholic School Society, the Committee came and thanked me for my exertions, and more particularly the Roman Catholic members of that Committee who were present at the sermon." And he repeats the sentiment expressed above, "May I be permitted to say upon this subject, with reference to the difficulties between Catholics and Protestants, I have felt those difficulties so very conquerable by friendship and kindness."

As to the best plan for religious teaching in a mixed school, he would have a Scriptural class provided, daily if possible, and nothing more. In this he agrees with the prevailing opinion of our time; but in another point he differs from it altogether. To the question whether that class should be compulsory he replies: "I would not have any part of the education given at the parish school made compulsory; they should no more be compelled to attend the Bible class than to attend the reading or arithmetic class. . . . It is the likeliest of all methods for limiting and preventing the spread of Scriptural education to attach anything like compulsion to it."

Two years later an Irish Education Scheme was carried by the Government, and in spite of all that he could say against it, the Irish Poor Law was enacted in 1838. In one important respect it differed from the English prototype. It was a Poor Law confined to

Indoor Relief—a restriction which the Commissioners had not ventured to propose in the case of England. The field was clear for this experiment, and the first Irish Act made no provision for Out-door Relief. Within ten years, however, an Amendment Act (1847) permitted the Guardians to grant it to the aged and infirm, to those suffering from mental or bodily defects, from accident or illness, to widows with two children, or whenever the workhouse should be fully occupied. In fact, the exceptions were so numerous as virtually to make the form of relief a matter for the discretion of the Board.

The year 1832 saw the passing of the Reform Act and the publication of Chalmers' *Political Economy*. The author of the book was not in favour of the Act. He was always against abuses, such as had prevailed under the old representation; but he considered it "wholesome and befitting" that political ascendency should remain with the landed interest. Above all, he considered it a gross delusion to suppose that men could improve their condition through the medium of the House of Commons. It was the purpose of his book to tell them so. "There!" said he, on hearing of the Bristol riots, "tak' ye that, my friend, as a swatch[1] of your political millennium!"

In 1834 Dr. Chalmers was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh and a Corresponding

[1] Swatch = a strip of cloth as a sample.

Member of the Royal Institute of France. In 1835 he was honoured by the University of Oxford with the degree of D.C.L. On this occasion the Public Orator described him in the following words:—"Præsento vobis venerandum et doctissimum virum, Thomam Chalmers, Regiæ Societatis socium, Publicum Theologiæ apud Edinenses Professorem, benignitate, doctrina, facundia, ut quem maxime, insignitum; qui pauperum sortem miseratus in melius promovere pro virili semper studuit."

CHAPTER IX.

CHURCH AND STATE.

"It is yours to found the Universal Family, to build up the Church of God, and unremittingly to labour towards the fulfilment of His great purpose in humanity."—*Mazzini.*

THE heading of this chapter seems to suggest a departure from the proper object of our study. But it is to be interpreted by the words which have been set beneath it. In order to estimate the work of Chalmers in charity it is necessary to understand the position of the Scottish Church and the nature of her conflict with the State. We have already seen that the Parish Church with her attendant, the Parish School, was the great agency on which he relied for that "education of principle" which alone could advance the people. To fulfil the purpose of her existence, he maintained that the church must be organised in a particular manner and supported by the State. We have now reached the time when a splendid period of growth and

vigour in the church was suddenly arrested by a crisis which shook the whole fabric of the establishment to its foundation, and parted its adherents into opposing camps. Such a transformation could not fail to have a profound effect upon the life and aims of Chalmers. Through success and failure he pressed forward in pursuit of his high ideal, beset by obstacles and difficulties, overwhelmed by the force of circumstances, disheartened at times, but never beaten. Our aim is to furnish a brief outline of this chapter of history, while dwelling more particularly on those events or phases which concern our special subject.

CHURCH EXTENSION—1834-41.

At the beginning of this period, Chalmers stands forth as the principal figure in the Church of Scotland. He is the leader of the Evangelical party which has already gained the ascendant, and is bent on progress. The time has come to extend throughout the whole of Scotland that parochial system which he has carried out in single districts and set before the world in his publications. He takes up the work of organisation on the largest scale.

As usual, the first step is to set a small example. From his house in Forres Street he would often walk towards the country over the new and lofty Dean Bridge, and pause to contemplate the deep

ravine of the "Water of Leith" stream, with the village of the same name packed within its narrow borders. It was a picturesque but squalid sight. The people numbered 1356, being "carters, quarrymen, and pig-feeders"; they were half savage and altogether neglected. "At the time of the cholera they had signalised themselves by the grossness of their misconduct." Here was the very spot for the Church to begin her mission to the masses. With the help of a few friends, Chalmers planted a missionary in a malt barn,[1] to go about among the people as their friend and draw them to religious meetings. In six months he had gathered a congregation of three or four hundred. In two years a church was built and regularly attended by 700 of the inhabitants.

A second local effort was very similar. Thirty subscribers were induced by Chalmers to give £100 each for the erection of a church in the Cowgate, one of the most destitute parts of the old town. On a gloomy day another great worker is standing on another bridge in Edinburgh. It is Dr. Guthrie, looking down from the South Bridge upon the crowded "closes" that stretch like ribs into the Cowgate. They swarm with rough, noisy, wretched-looking people, and it is for these that he has left a charming sea-side parish to come and be their

[1] See above, chap. iv., page 198.

minister. He says, "my rather sad and sombre ruminations were suddenly checked. A hand was laid on my shoulder. I turned round to find Dr. Chalmers at my elbow. . . . Contemplating the scene for a little in silence, all at once, with his broad, Luther-like face glowing with enthusiasm, he waved his arm to exclaim, 'A beautiful field, sir; a very fine field of operation.'"

And now the larger movement had begun. An old friend, Mr. Collins, came to tell him of the adoption of a scheme, which he had himself proposed in 1817, for building twenty new churches in Glasgow. His labours had borne good fruit. The legal obstacles had been removed. In a few months £20,000 was subscribed by that wealthy and generous community.

This vigorous example roused the Assembly, and Chalmers led them on the crusade of Church Extension. It had an ample field, for since the Reformation the population had more than doubled, without a corresponding addition to the ministry. The results were most marked in the larger towns, which contained masses of heathenism. A Committee on Church Accommodation was appointed with Chalmers as the convener. He accepted the position eagerly, and set to work at once on a national appeal. This included a general fund and local efforts. "I have begun with the higher kind of game, such as dukes

and marquises, etc., intending to come down to parochial penny-a-week associations; and such is my estimation of the superior productiveness of the latter that ten times rather than have what all the dukes of Scotland could afford me, I would have what all the ditchers of Scotland could afford me. . . . Let us never forget that a penny a week from each household of Scotland would afford the yearly sum of a hundred thousand pounds."

The object of the movement was clearly stated. It was to provide "a cheap Christian education for the common people." And the new churches were to be of the kind which he described as "territorial," meaning that they were planted right among the poor, with a cheap system of seat-letting and a preference to the residents in the territory. It was in vain for some opponents to point out that the existing churches were half empty. That was just an argument in favour of the new ones, which were designed to attract the people of the parish. "(1) We provide them with a church *near enough*, else they are still unprovided families. (2) We are labouring to provide them with a church at *seat rents low enough*, else they are obviously still unprovided families. (3) We take care that *the district be small enough*, and its families few enough to be thoroughly pervaded by the week-day attentions of a clergyman." It was the local principle as of old,

but applied throughout the country. "Our object is not in the general to build churches, but to plant *territorial churches* in those places where we judge that they are wanted."

The Government were next approached in order to obtain an endowment for the new parishes. This was a natural course, but in view of the existing circumstances it was ill-advised. At first the request was favourably entertained by Lord Chancellor Brougham and other statesmen. Very soon it raised a storm of opposition on the part of the Dissenters, and instead of the desired endowment it led to the appointment of a Royal Commission of no friendly character to inquire into the condition of the Church. At home the campaign went forward so fast that in a single year £65,000 had been collected, and sixty-four new churches were in course of construction; and in 1836 meetings were arranged all over the country, to which deputies from the Assembly were sent as speakers. The appeal to England had a very different result. The question of church extension was brought into the field of politics, and submitted to the judgment of the reformed Parliament, in which were many who cared little for the interests at stake. They quickly perceived that the case of Scotland was only one of three, and similar Commissions followed for England and Ireland.

Chalmers accordingly went to London in 1838,

and lectured in favour of Religious Establishments. He had always felt a great sympathy for the English Church. Though he disapproved of much of her ritual, and of the form of her connection with the State, he had found her in possession of a true local organisation, and he heartily appreciated the mental and moral atmosphere in which her clergy lived and their self-denying work among the poor. On this occasion he stood forth as her champion not less than the ambassador of the Presbyterian Assembly. He claimed the support of "England's best principled and best educated men" against the revolutionary spirit of their day. Once more he carried all before him. The lectures were crowded by the leading men of the metropolis, and received with the wildest enthusiasm. They were printed at once, and sold in thousands through the provinces, and the substance of the whole series was simply the territorial system. The State was to endow the churches in order that the country might be broken up into small sections, each of which could be "thoroughly pervaded" by a zealous minister. This was the only way to reach the masses.

We have noticed that Chalmers had lately become a member of the Royal Institute of France. In this year he went on to Paris and read an essay before that body, giving a summary of his views on Charity and State Relief. He proceeded on a tour through

some of the inland provinces, in the course of which he formed an idea of the voluntary system of relief at work in France as well as the condition and prospects of the nation, and discussed his opinions with Guizot, who "fully congenialised" with him in many points. With other men he was a good deal embarrassed by his "total want of French."

In 1839 he made a journey through the south-west of Scotland, addressing meetings on behalf of church extension, and followed it up by a "Great Northern Tour" for the same purpose. "And now," he writes, "I may say that I have been in every Scotch county in the island of Great Britain except Caithness, and every English county except Cornwall."

In the cause which he had taken up with such enthusiasm he laboured with unwearied energy for seven years, during which he ceased to be a member of the Assembly in order that he might give full time to the work of the Extension Committee. Truly it may be said that the success and the national character of this great movement were mainly due to the organising ability of Chalmers.

The results appeared in the report presented by the committee in 1841, by which time 222 new churches had been built and more than £300,000 had been raised by voluntary contribution. In reference to this brief but brilliant period, he says, "we abolished the union of offices—we are planting

schools—we are multiplying chapels—we are sending forth missionaries to distant parts of the world—we have purified and invigorated the discipline—we are extending the Church, and rallying our population around its venerable standard—we are bringing the sectaries again within its pale—and last, though not least, we have reformed the patronage; and our licentiates, instead of a tutorship in the families of the great as their stepping-stone to preferment, now betake themselves to a parochial assistantship or to a preaching station, with its correspondent home-walk of Christian usefulness among the families of the surrounding poor, as the likeliest passage to a higher place in their profession, even as it is the best preparation for the duties of their high calling. And not only is there the visible glow of this great and wholesome reform abroad over the country, or in the outer department of the Church, but in the business of its courts and judicatories, in the General Assembly itself, there is the same great and obvious reformation; so that, instead of the ecclesiastico-political arena which it once was, more at least than half its time is taken up with the beseeming cares of a great moral institute, devising for the Christian good and the best interests of men both at home and abroad." All this had been attained or was in full process of attainment when the crisis came.

THE DISRUPTION.

Chalmers had now reached the age of sixty, and it was his desire to withdraw from public work, with the feeling that "the seventh decade of human life should be turned into the Sabbath of our earthly pilgrimage, and . . . spent as if at the gate of heaven." He had translated his principles into practice; he had made them known to the world; he had organised the means for their extension over the whole field. His life had been complete and full of labour; he had earned the right to contemplation and repose. But it is not for man to choose his path. In the few remaining years he was to plunge into a desperate strife—to witness the failure of his most cherished hopes—to organise a new crusade, beginning the work all over again—and to die at last in harness.

The appeal of the Church to the people of Scotland had been crowned with splendid success. Never had her position been more commanding or her work more vigorous. The appeal to the State brought nothing but disaster. Not only was financial support withheld, but the Civil Court of Session at once began to interfere with her right to the appointment and control of her own ministers. A further appeal was necessary to obtain protection from these attacks; and then the whole question of the relations between Church and State was raised. We have now to

explain briefly the causes and meaning of the great secession.

From the Reformation downwards the Scottish Established Church held a different position from that of England. The king was not her head. She claimed the right of absolute self-government. It was granted at her foundation by the Scottish Parliament in 1567. It was maintained against the Stuart tyranny, when 400 ministers were driven into the mountains, shot and persecuted, for refusing to admit the king's supremacy. "For this principle," says Chalmers, "during the reign of Charles II., 18,000 of our countrymen, great and small, gentle and simple, laid down their lives." It was ratified by one of the first Acts of William III. And, as Chalmers told the Assembly, "from 1688 to 1838—from the time of the Revolution settlement to the time when the Court of Session gave forth its interdict against the Presbytery of Dunkeld in the case of Lethendy—no civil power ever attempted to interfere with the steps of our ecclesiastical procedure, or to meddle with our Establishment in aught but the temporalities which belong to her." As to the latter, it was fully admitted that the State could in any instance withdraw the revenue which she had granted; her nominee might enjoy the income of a parish, but he could not exercise the duties of a minister unless appointed by the Church. That was the line of demarcation. The Church would

"never submit to State control, save in the disposal of the State's emoluments." There was a compact between the two parties:—"We gave them our services but not our liberties, getting at their hands a maintenance for our clergy, and engaging in return for the Christian education of the people; a conjunction, we think, fruitful of innumerable blessings both to the Church and to society, but in which the value given is many hundredfold greater than the value received. Still, if the State be not satisfied with the bargain, they can at any time give us up. If, over and above our services in things spiritual, they must also have our submission in things spiritual, in these we have another Master, to whom, and to whom alone, we are responsible. . . . Sir," he exclaimed at the end of this speech, "we have nailed this colour to the mast. . . . We may break into a thousand differences on the Veto Law; of the sacred liberties of our Church there will be no surrender."

In his London lectures he had quoted the remark of an American clergyman: "If all you mean by an Establishment is an organised provision for a clergy, we should rejoice in it. The thing we deprecate is the authority of the civil magistrate in matters of religion."

Such was the position for which Chalmers fought in Scotland and in London. The contest began with several cases of patronage, in which the attempt was

made to impose a minister on a parish by the authority of the secular court and against the judgment of the Church. In one instance a whole Presbytery was summoned before the Court of Session, and though supported by the General Assembly, it was censured and threatened with imprisonment for breaking the law by refusing to admit the minister. In another a Presbytery defied the Assembly and was supported in its contumacy by the Civil Court. The situation had become unbearable, and the only way out of it was to approach the other party to the alliance, and to seek from Parliament a confirmation of the ancient liberties.

When this step was first taken, the Whigs were in office under Lord Melbourne and Lord John Russell. After six years of negotiation they confessed their inability to draft any measure which would give satisfaction. The Tories under Sir Robert Peel next made the attempt, and gave it up as hopeless after six months. In those days it would have been difficult for either party to legislate in favour of a State Church. But even among those Englishmen who would willingly have supported the Scottish Establishment, there was hardly one who could sympathise with, or even understand, a claim for so much greater liberty than that of the sister Church in England. It seemed to them an impossible position to assert that any Church should take the money

of the State and yet decline to accept her control. Most of the leading statesmen had held friendly intercourse with Chalmers, and were sincerely anxious to arrive at a settlement. But the House of Lords confirmed the proceedings of the Court of Session. Lord Brougham was of the same opinion; and the law was interpreted by the highest authorities as opposed to the pretensions of the Scottish Church. Lord John Russell regarded them as impracticable; Sir Robert Peel declared them to be illegal and unjust; Lord Melbourne treated them with contempt; and the Earl of Aberdeen in despair withdrew a Bill in which he had tried to meet them.

Lastly, within the Church itself there was a minority, consisting of the old Moderate party, which was prepared to accept the State control in addition to the State supplies. Had the Assembly been unanimous, it is possible that they might have carried their point, but the existence of this party created the impression that if the Government stood firm, the Church would be obliged to yield. Among the majority Chalmers had been the leading spirit all along. The very word "Disruption" was taken from one of his speeches referring to the possibility of such an occurrence long before it was anticipated by other men. The details of the long and weary controversy may be studied at full length in his *Memoirs*, or more briefly in the pages of Mrs. Oliphant.

Here it is enough to add that the Assembly was driven at last to take the extreme step of presenting a Claim of Right to Parliament, and on the rejection of this Claim in 1843, its supporters had no alternative but to quit the Establishment. They went out to the number of 470, amidst a whirl of popular enthusiasm.

The dramatic nature of this climax has had the unfortunate effect of diverting attention from the solid and enduring work of Chalmers. To many his name suggests little beyond a single striking scene in Church history. But in truth the great Secession is to be regarded as a fatal interruption to his work, which occurred towards the very end of his life, and for a time blasted all his hopes. This was the way in which he regarded it himself. That the Church which he loved should have survived even this crushing blow, and gradually regained her strength, was one more proof of the fitness of her ancient motto—"*Nec tamen consumebatur.*"

THE SCOTTISH POOR LAW.

It was at this very time that the second great object of Chalmers' life was overthrown. Dr. Alison published his pamphlet on pauperism in 1840, showing the destitution that prevailed in the large towns, and urging, as the only possible remedy, the immediate extension of the Poor Law to the whole of Scotland. Like his great rival on former occasions, he carried

all before him, and in 1844 his wishes were fulfilled. Chalmers made a last desperate stand in defence of his principles by publishing his book on "The Sufficiency of the Parochial System without a Poor Rate," which is the most concise and interesting of his works on pauperism. It consisted of a series of lectures given to his divinity students with the addition of extracts from his other writings. He sent a copy of it to more than a hundred "public and parliamentary men," each being accompanied by a letter from himself. This was no light piece of work in the busy days of 1841. Among the replies we find one from Carlyle, from which a few sentences have been quoted on our title page. It contains also the following remarks:—"A wholesome, grateful, air of hope, brotherly kindness, cheerful sagacity, salutes me from this book. . . . It seems to me a great truth this fundamental principle of yours, which I trace as the origin of all these hopes, endeavours, and convictions in regard to pauperism, that human things cannot stand on selfishness, mechanical utilities, economics, and law-courts; that if there be not a religious element in the relations of men, such relations are miserable and doomed to ruin. A Poor Law can be no lasting remedy; the poor and the rich, when once the naked parts of their condition come into collision, cannot long live together upon a Poor Law! Solely as a sad transitionary palliative

against still fiercer miseries and insupportabilities can it pretend to recommend itself, till something better be vouchsafed us, with true healing under its wings."

A few facts will show the absurdity of Dr. Alison's position. There were at this time 643 non-assessed and 236 assessed parishes in Scotland. The two groups were practically equal in population and in the number of dependent poor. But the expenditure was double in the second group. It contained the large towns from which Dr. Alison drew his instances of destitution. The destitution had been caused by their recent and rapid growth. These large towns were already under the system of assessment. His remedy for their destitution was to extend the system to the rest of the country.

But the tide of popular sentiment ran far too strong to be checked by any considerations arising out of calculation or philosophy, and the "moral system" was swept away by the "pecuniary."

The following pathetic words occur in the private diary of Chalmers in connection with the events related in this chapter. "The passage respecting Babel should not be without an humble and wholesome effect upon my spirit. I have been set on the erection of my Babel—on the establishment of at least two great objects, which, however right in themselves, become the mere idols of a fond and proud imagination, in as far as they are not prosecuted

with a feeling of dependence upon God, and a supreme desire after His glory. These two objects are the deliverance of our empire from pauperism, and the establishment of an adequate machinery for the Christian and general instruction of our whole population. I am sure that in the advancement of these I have not taken God enough along with me, and trusted more to my own arguments and combinations among my fellows than to prayers. There has been no confounding of tongues to prevent a common understanding, so indispensable to that co-operation without which there can be no success, but without this miracle my views have been marvellously impeded by a diversity of opinions, as great as if it had been brought on by a diversity of language. The barriers in the way of access to other men's minds have been as obstinate and unyielding as if I had spoken to them in foreign speech; and though I cannot resign my convictions, I must now—and surely it is good to be so taught—I must now, under the experimental sense of my own helplessness, acknowledge with all humility, yet with hope in the efficacy of a blessing from on high still in reserve for the day of God's own appointed time, that 'except the Lord build the house the builders build in vain.' In thine own time, Almighty Father, regenerate this earth, and gather its people into one happy harmonious family."

CHAPTER X.

CLOSING SCENES.

"More than once in days
Of doubt and cloud and storm, when drowning hope
Sank all but out of sight, I heard His voice.
I know that He has led me all my life;
I am not yet too old to work His will."—*Columbus.*

HOWEVER melancholy the prospect might appear, Chalmers was not the man to fold his hands in despair. With him disappointment acted as an incentive to fresh exertion. His organising powers were brought into full play a second time and even on a grander scale. Already he had gone to work with undiminished energy and enthusiasm. "The God of heaven he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build." This was the motto under which he summoned his forces for the new enterprise.

THE FREE CHURCH.

More than a year before the Disruption took place he had prepared a scheme for the support of the new

Free Church, and as soon as the change became inevitable, it was put in working order. A Provisional Committee was established at headquarters under three sections—financial, architectural, statistical, and Chalmers undertook the first, on which the whole depended. Two funds were formed, a Building Fund, composed of donations, and a Sustentation Fund, of "termly" subscriptions. Circulars were issued and associations started over all the country with districts and collectors to gather in the money; and the ablest of the seceding ministers went forth to "itinerate," and hold meetings to organise the means of support in every parish. All this was set on foot six months before the actual secession. When the decisive moment came, full advantage was taken of the popular excitement. In a few days after the issue of the first circular nearly £20,000 was in hand. "It has come in upon us like a set rain at the rate of £1000 a day." The contributors were chiefly among the middle and lower classes, not the upper, and again a striking testimony was borne to the value of "accumulated littles" and the power of "infinitesimals."

The first step of the new Church was to select Chalmers for its head as Moderator in the Free Assembly. He was also Convener of the Financial Committee, and presented their first report. The local associations by this time numbered 687, and

their contributions being brought together in Edinburgh were sufficient to furnish a yearly income of £100 for every minister, which his congregation could supplement by collection at the church doors. This plan of centralising the Sustentation Fund provided a substitute for the revenue formerly received from the State. Not less remarkable was the success of the Building Fund, for nearly 500 churches were erected in a single year. Chalmers was very sanguine at this time, and not without cause. "If we only make a proper use of the summer that is before us, . . . if we do what we might and what we ought, we will not only be able to repair the whole Disruption, but will get landed in the great and glorious work of church extension." It was "a bright and beautiful ulterior, to which every eye should be directed," to form "a Church commensurate with the land in which we dwell . . . to Christianise the whole of Scotland."

By these vigorous and extremely able measures he did at least succeed in creating a second Church, differing from the old one in the single point of connection with the State, but organised on the same parochial system, and by no means inferior to it in power or solidity. An outside observer might well think that the means of Christian education had been doubled by the secession and the wonderful outburst of sympathetic aid which followed it. On the other

hand, we must remember that two rival camps had been formed instead of a concentration of forces. Two rival Churches stood in the place of one united Church, and it is seldom that revolutionary methods are productive of the lasting results attainable through a continuous course of progress and improvement. Both Chalmers and his biographer were convinced that far more success might have been achieved by a single ministry carrying the extension forward on its old lines, with undivided allegiance. The Church would then have "numbered among her adherents more than two-thirds of the population," and would have advanced with irresistible strength to reclaim the waste places of the land. On the whole, it appears difficult to decide whether the gain was greater than the loss.

THE WEST PORT.

No sooner was the Free Church fairly established on a sound financial basis than Chalmers was eager to see it employed on a great Home Mission for the improvement of the people. The older Dissenting bodies were invited to make common cause in this effort by the formation of an Evangelical Alliance which should embrace them all. At first these overtures were met with hearty sympathy. Their interest had been awakened; their objects were identical; they came to meetings, and were ready to co-operate. But

in one most important feature they differed from the followers of Chalmers,—from the men who, "with or without endowments from the State, will never, I trust, let down the parochial system, who will still continue to hold by parishes as well as congregations . . . and so identify our doings over the whole length and breadth of the country with the localities and families of Scotland." In this respect the Free Church was national and the rest were not. Failing in his endeavour to organise a general advance on these lines, he began for the third time at the very beginning. He would prove to all the Churches the efficacy, the necessity, of the territorial system. And so, after all his great enterprises, we find him at the very close of his life calmly settling down again "to work off one model or normal specimen of the process by which . . . piecemeal and successively the whole even of this great and growing evil might be overtaken." It was a fitting end to his career. "I have determined," he says, "to assume a poor district of 2000 people, and superintend it myself, though it be a work greatly too much for my declining strength and means." Once more his voice is heard in public lectures, insisting on the old themes of "locality" and "the aggressive method." He sweeps aside all partisanship in his fervent way:—"Who cares about the Free Church, compared with the Christian good of the people of Scotland? Who cares about any Church,

but as an instrument of Christian good?" And then the work begins.

The district chosen was the very worst in Edinburgh. The degraded state of many of the dwellers in its foul closes has been graphically described by the minister who worked under Chalmers. On one occasion he found all the inhabitants of a large tenement-house so drunk that they could not hear their children crying for food; he gave them bread, which a drunken mother at once exchanged for whisky. Half the population were paupers, beggars, thieves or prostitutes. The place had become infamous a few years before by the secret murders of Burke and Hare. Dr. Chalmers opened his first school-room in a disused tannery opposite the den to which they had decoyed their victims.

The old plan was at once inaugurated and taken up by a band of zealous associates. The West Port was divided into twenty sections of twenty families, with a visitor to each, who began by leaving a printed paper, explaining the objects in view, at every door. As at Glasgow, they were to be not almoners but friends, and their first step was to get the children to school. He told them his old experiences, and exhorted them to rely on the power of self-help among the people. "I think that a great and radical error in the management of our population has just proceeded from the idea that they are utterly helpless and unable to do

anything for themselves. I believe that if you proceed rightly, it will be found that they are able to do a great deal for themselves. I know that there is a difference of opinion on this point; but I stand up most inflexibly on the subject of school fees, and think those persons ought to pay for the education of their children. I want to train up the families in the sentiment that education is worth its price, and to win them to the paying of that price. . . . The lesson which I am constantly giving out is that we shall not be able to do aught which is permanently effectual for the people's good unless they will lend a hand," unless we "enlist them as fellow-workers in the cause."

Every Saturday an evening meeting of the visitors was held to report what they were doing and discuss their difficulties. In the life by Mr. Dodds (chap. xxv.) will be found a most interesting account of one of these meetings in the dilapidated store-loft, to which he succeeded in obtaining admission on a dripping winter night by the creaky wooden staircase outside the wall. We see the Doctor in his chair, benignant and modest, but keenly alive to every detail; and we hear the working-men around him with their questions and suggestions, "But d'ye no' think, Doctor?" "Are you aware, Doctor?" and so on. It is a vivid picture of the man at his work. How deeply he was interested in the experiment may be learnt from the prayers on its behalf in his private diary. He would

abandon other work under medical order, but not the West Port. At every step he was there with counsel, direction, and encouragement. Of the temper in which he entered on this task, after his lifelong experience, we may judge from a few lines in his diary :—"O how incompetent I feel myself to be for acting the part of a cautious and wise general in the midst of them! Be my help and my adviser, O God, and tell me by Thy Word and Spirit what I ought to do."

Three months after starting, a meeting was convened of the residents, "the genuine West-Porters," as he called them. They were told that a first-rate school would be provided for their children, but that twopence a week must be paid for each of them, which was much less than the education would be worth. The rough audience were delighted with the address, and readily accepted the offer. A letter from Chalmers to his new schoolmaster, Mr. Sinclair, shows clearly the object that he had in view. "It is not to fill that school anyhow, but to fill it from the families of the West Port. . . . I have all confidence in your energy and ability as a teacher, and like exceedingly the special attention which you mean to bestow on those clever boys that you would employ as monitors. But your preference should be for West Port boys, rather than for those who might be afterwards brought in from beyond

the locality. Be assured that you will meet with a full average of talent among the ragged children of this outlandish population. Our great object in fact is to reclaim them from their present outlandishness, and raise them to a higher platform. We may have a good deal to encounter in the way of slovenliness and untoward habits at the outset; but the achievement will be all the more honourable if you succeed. . . . Let us only have patience and toleration for all the disagreeables of our outset, whether as regards the school or the scholars. Let us recollect the coarse materials that we have in the first instance to deal with, gradually to be improved, however, by the refining and humanising process which they will be made to undergo. Do come then, my dear sir, with a heart alive to the importance, and resolved, as far as in you lies, on the success of this great enterprise; and so earn the title to one of the highest achievements which can possibly be contemplated, either by the enlightened patriot or by the Christian philanthropist." The school began with 121 day and evening scholars, and the number was doubled in the first year.

After the school came the church. As soon as a good number of children had been secured, the attempt was made to reach their parents and relations. The tan-loft was opened for religious services. A dozen old women attended on the first occasion;

but by the end of the year there was a congregation of about a hundred. A zealous minister had been found in Mr. Tasker, who entered heartily into the work and wrote a "Territorial Visitor's Manual" for the guidance of the helpers. A library, savings bank, washing-house, and female industrial school were soon established. The aid of the sanitary authority was invoked, and there is mention of a "a Female Agency." The undertaking was to be made "as complete as possible," in order that it might be instructive as an example. In the third year many friends supplied the means to build a church and school, and to fit up a tenement as model lodgings for working-men.

In his last circular, Chalmers could point to the cultivation of the West Port as an illustration of the old principles. "We have long thought that the failure of every former attempt to reclaim the masses of our population is due to the insufficiency of the means which have been brought to bear upon them. . . . We hold it irrational to look for any great or sensible result with so slender an apparatus as that of Sabbath schools and prayer meetings, and rare occasional visits from house to house, under the conduct, it may be, of a few missionaries for the whole of a large town." Each agent is dispirited, his efforts are "dissipated or lost . . . in that mighty aggregate of human beings wherewith he has

to deal. It is under this conviction that we have long advocated the concentration of commensurate efforts and means on a small enough territory. What cannot be done in bulk and all at once, let us try in separate portions." This is the essence of "what we have called the territorial principle. We limit our attention to a single district or locality, itself split into sub-districts, each having a Christian agent attached to it." The result is to obtain "a busy internal missionary process . . . a recruiting process both for church and schools," which terminates at length in a parochial economy of a thoroughly pervading power and character. "If the hundreds of Christian philanthropists in Edinburgh and Glasgow, and the thousands in London, were in little separate bands to select their respective localities and do the same thing, a single decade of years might not pass away without our being landed in the blessed result of a better and happier generation."

In the West Port not more than two years were required to effect a very striking improvement. Instead of three-fourths of the children being absent from school, three-fourths of the children were in regular attendance; and the parents were paying £70 a year for their education. The school was a civilising force because great aims were combined with attention to minute details. "We have upwards of a hundred girls at this school, and I have no recol-

lection of anything so sudden, so much *per saltum*, as the transition in the aspect of these girls, from the time of their first raggedness, as they were found running about the streets in that destitute locality, to the personal cleanliness and respectability which they now exhibit. Their appearance indeed is altogether delightful. The boys, I may state, have not made so large an advance as the girls in point of appearance; but altogether the schools present a most attractive and delightful spectacle. I have been told that a number of the plebeian schools in our city have been abandoned by female visitors, in virtue of want of personal cleanliness. By the use of baths, this want is counteracted. The truth is, that there is nothing like going thoroughly to work; we even take cognisance of the hair-cutting, as far as the boys are concerned. We have made a bargain—I don't know that it is a very cheap one—but we got a hairdresser to clip the boys' heads at eighteenpence a dozen, which is at the rate of three half-pence a head. I can just say this much, that I am sure that the ruder and rawer the material is, out of which finished goods are worked, the greater is the triumph of the manufacturing art." And he bids us remember "that these poor people have all the capacities of human spirits, that they have talents, that they have imperishable souls, that they are on a full level of equality with ourselves in all that is essential to man,

and that we have nothing to do but to go and do them justice, and to give up the shameful neglect which we have indulged towards the lower classes, . . . and it is not to be told to what height of advancement, morally, intellectually and economically, they are capable of being raised."

It was not long before the whole aspect of the district had become more clean and orderly; and when the new church was opened, 300 sittings were immediately taken, nearly all of them by the local people. They had themselves contributed £100 towards the cost of building it. Nor was this a momentary impulse which would subside on the removal of its originator. Five years after the death of Chalmers, every child was at school; and the congregation not only paid the whole of the church expenses, amounting to nearly £250 a year, but further contributed £70 to missionary and educational objects. It was thus proved that after the initial cost of building church and school had been defrayed, the free-will offerings of the people would suffice to maintain them.

THE POTATO FAMINE.

The failure of the potato crop in 1846 reduced 300,000 Highlanders and Islanders in Scotland, and a vastly greater number of Irishmen, to destitution. Chalmers foresaw the impending calamity, and before

the actual want had begun, he made strenuous exertions to arouse the public sympathy. He saw that the nation had "a most inadequate view of the efforts necessary to keep our suffering population alive. . . . Ever since the failure of the potato crop became quite notorious, I have felt as if the country at large were under a delusion in underrating, as I fear they do, the fearfulness of a visitation which, if not provided against, will land us in a great national tragedy. If people would only have recourse to the plainest arithmetic, and think of the hundreds and thousands of families, both in the Highlands and in Ireland, who are positively without the materials of subsistence for a week, and further think that, for six months at least, we can look for nothing from the soil, this might well convince them how far the public imagination falls short of the reality of the case." He collected reliable information both from general sources and by private circulars; and the Free Church was the first public body to take action, by ordering a collection in all her districts which amounted to £15,000. It was followed up by larger measures of relief, so that while thousands perished in Ireland, "it was not known that in Scotland a single individual died solely and directly from want of food." Very large sums were entrusted to him personally for private distribution, and passed on to persons known to him in various places, both in

Scotland and Ireland. Finally he sought to draw lessons for the future from this great calamity. His general opinions were published in a paper on "The Political Economy of a Famine" in the *North British Review*, a new periodical to which he had contributed several essays on kindred subjects. He proceeded to collect materials for an account of the Relief Works in Ireland, with a view to illustrating the dangers of public charity, the connection between the moral and economic state of a country, and the best means of encouraging industry and raising the Irish poor to a more satisfactory condition. This work he did not live to execute.

CONCLUSION.

It only remains to wind up a few of the loose threads in our narrative.

In addition to the work already described, Dr. Chalmers had been occupied in lecturing to the students of the new Free College on German philosophy, and publishing a work called the *Institutes of Theology*. He was the first Principal and Professor of Divinity in this College, and laid the foundation-stone of its new buildings in 1846. On that occasion he rejoiced to observe the number of working-men who stood within the reach of his voice. He spoke to them of "the essential equality of human souls." The object of the College would be to teach its

students "that the Christian minister is a man of no rank, because a man of all ranks; and that, although he should have an education which might qualify him for holding converse with princes and peers, it is his peculiar glory to be a frequent visitant of the poor man's humble cottage, and to pray by the poor man's dying bed." It would be their task to rescue the lowest of the people from ignorance and dissipation, and enable them to "take place along with us, side by side, on the footing of kindred and companionable men. Let kings retain their sceptres, and nobles their coronets—what we want is a more elevated ground-floor for our general population, and this without derangement to the upper stories of the social and political edifice, where may our beloved Queen, God bless her, long retain upon its summit the place of gracefulness and glory which she now occupies." The latter aspiration has been fully realised; to a large extent also the former.

The organisation of the Free Church was a splendid test of the efficacy of the voluntary system, and Chalmers declared that he would most heartily rejoice if his theory of the need of State aid was submerged by the flood of supplies which he had called forth, like the well-digger in the fable. This might well seem to be the case. In the four years after the Disruption provision had been made for the 470

clergymen who quitted the Establishment, and 250 more had been added to their number. Churches had been built for every congregation at a cost of £450,000, and manses for £100,000. A college had been founded with nine salaried professorships, as well as scholarships for students. £50,000 had been raised for schools, of which 600 were at work, besides two training colleges for masters. A large sum also was devoted to missionary work in all parts of the world. Yet his opinion remained unshaken. He was not satisfied with the work done in reclaiming the waste places, and he was much disheartened by the "congregational selfishness" within the Church. Neither "internal nor external voluntaryism" would, in his judgment, make up for the loss of the State endowment. In the height of its extraordinary success he spoke of "the impotence, now fully established, of the voluntary system."

With regard to education, his hopes could only be realised in part. The Government produced a scheme in 1847 for the support and inspection of schools of all denominations. The Bible was to be read daily, but any further religious instruction would be at the discretion of the managers. In his final "deliverance" on this question Chalmers accepted the compromise as the best thing attainable, on account of the dissensions in the Christian world. Since no more could be expected he was willing

that a provision should be made for merely secular education, just as it might be made for sanitation, or recreation, or any other necessary purpose. But he still held that the real duty of a government was to endow the teaching of "the true religion" whenever it should be possible for them to do so.

On the 25th of April, 1847, Dr. Chalmers presided at the first Sacrament in his new Church in the West Port. "I wish," he says, "to communicate what to me is the most joyful event of my life. I have been intent for thirty years on the completion of a territorial experiment, and I have now to bless God for the consummation of it. . . . I have got now the desire of my heart—the church is finished, the schools are flourishing, our ecclesiastical machinery is about complete, and all in good working order. God has indeed heard my prayer, and I could now lay down my head in peace and die." On the 7th of May he was again in London, where he gave evidence before a Committee of the House of Commons on the state of the Churches in Scotland. He paid a pleasant visit to Carlyle at Chelsea, and spent some quiet hours at the Athenæum. Then he preached at Brighton, and went by rail to Oxford and Bristol. On the 26th he arrived in Edinburgh, and on the night of the 30th he died in his sleep.

So passed away the spirit of the great and wise reformer—in the quiet of his own house, where he

had bidden "a general good-night" to his family; in the midst of the work for which he had arranged to rise early on the next morning; attended by the loving sorrow of his countrymen, who came in thousands to accompany his mortal frame to its last resting-place.

Chalmers was great in the whole art of charity—great in his ability for organising national movements or parish details—great in his discovery and persistent application of the truth, in the eloquence which enforced it on his fellow-men, in the personal character which won their allegiance. Therefore his work has a permanent value, not confined to a single age or set of persons. Like the example of the brave who fell in a later struggle, it remains as an inheritance and source of strength to all who come after. "We find in our dull road their shining track."[1] For nations and societies are made of individuals, and every man must learn the same lessons if he would serve his generation faithfully.

There are stages in the evolution of charity amongst a people; and there are steps by which each man may rise to higher conceptions of its meaning. The call of human sympathy gives birth to natural but vague attempts at usefulness. At this point many seem to halt and make no further progress all their lives. Others are moved by a stronger sense of duty, and

[1] Lowell: *Harvard Commemoration Ode.*

press on to deeper study and more intelligent activity. They soon perceive the difficulties in their path; they learn the need of training and experience; they are resolved to spare no labour and to persevere. In their pursuit of thoroughness they surely gain an insight into the principles which underlie their work. Then it may be that the cheerful confidence with which they started will fade before the sad revelation that much of their most earnest effort has been thrown away. Watching results, we cannot fail to see how many whose burdens we have tried to share, are not the better, but the weaker, for our help; how many whom we were obliged to leave unaided, have risen in consequence of our neglect. Thus we are driven to the question whether help in the true sense be not something altogether different from any gift which can be estimated by a material standard. Is it not true, as one has noted, that the power to say, Rise up and walk, belongs to him who can also say, Silver and gold have I none? Do we not find in numberless instances that charitable relief is the very opposite of charity? What then, it may be asked, is help? Where shall we trace it with certainty save in the exercise of an influence that braces men to bear their own burdens till they are strengthened by the use of limbs and faculties? Does it not mean encouragement in providence and industry, in the acquisition of knowledge and wisdom,

in the formation of a noble character? If this be so, must we not recognise that it is by moral and by indirect means alone that any true benefit can be conferred? As we draw near to this conclusion we shall seek to remodel our work in harmony with a new ideal.

Chalmers saw through it all from the beginning. Therefore he laboured to plant a right spirit in his fellow-men; to furnish the means whereby it might prevail; to make the best work universal. When we compare our feeble aims and slack performance with his straight course and firm reliance on the higher qualities of human nature,—do we not feel the need of such a guide?

> "I would the great world grew like thee,
> Who grewest not alone in power
> And knowledge, but by year and hour,
> In reverence and in charity."

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